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**Cognitive Testing of the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS)
Mailing Materials**

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Abstract

There is evidence from previous census years that the decennial census has an impact on American Community Survey (ACS) response rates, with ACS response increasing before census day and decreasing after census day. This may be because some respondents do not recognize that they are being asked to respond to two distinct requests from the Census Bureau. In 2010, the use of messaging in ACS materials explaining that the survey is different from the census improved ACS participation compared to the standard production materials. Therefore, an interdivisional Census Bureau team made similar updates to the ACS materials for 2020 which were then cognitively tested with 20 participants. Overall, the revised materials were successful at distinguishing the ACS from the 2020 Census and communicating that response to both is mandatory. Most of the recommended language was implemented into materials that were planned for the March-September 2020 ACS panels. However, mailing constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in modifications to this plan for the April-September 2020 ACS panels. Because of this, we recommend conducting additional testing prior to 2030 to inform decisions about their use.

Keywords: American Community Survey, decennial census, mail materials

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is evidence from previous census years that the decennial census has an impact on American Community Survey (ACS) response rates, with ACS response increasing before census day and decreasing after census day (Chesnut and Davis 2011; Baumgardner 2013). This may be because some people whose addresses are sampled for the ACS may not recognize that they are being asked to respond to two distinct requests from the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau developed alternative 2010 ACS mailing materials for use during the time of the 2010 Census that explained the ACS was different from the 2010 Census and that respondents were required to complete both. The Census Bureau also developed a field flier that ACS field representatives (FRs) could use during in-person data collection to further differentiate the ACS from the 2010 Census. The mailing materials improved ACS participation compared to the production ACS materials (Chesnut and Davis 2011) and FRs reported using the flier frequently. The Census Bureau planned to implement similar revisions to the ACS mailing materials and to use a field flier during the 2020 Census; however, this plan was impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on ACS data collection.

Using the 2018 ACS production materials, an interdivisional Census Bureau review team updated the materials for 2020 with similar changes to those made to the materials in 2010. Revisions were also made to the field flier that was used in 2010. These materials were cognitively tested with 20 participants during fall 2018. The goal of the cognitive interviews was to answer the following research questions:

1. Did participants understand that the ACS was different from the decennial census? If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
2. Did participants understand that they were required to complete both the ACS and the census? If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
3. Did participants notice and understand the language on the flap of the third mailing envelope? Was one version of the flap wording more successful than the other in getting participants to understand that the ACS is different from the census and that they are required to complete both?
4. Did the FAQs answer the questions that participants had? What questions did participants have that were not answered by the FAQs?
5. After seeing the field flier, did participants understand that the ACS was different than the census?

Overall, the revised materials were successful at distinguishing the ACS from the 2020 Census and communicating that response to both is mandatory. In this report, we describe cognitive interview findings and make recommendations for additional changes to the materials. We also describe how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the use of the recommended materials.

2 INTRODUCTION

In response to demand for more timely social, economic, and housing data, the U.S. Census Bureau began development and testing of a continuous data collection alternative to the decennial census long-form in the 1990s and early 2000s (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Later named the American Community Survey (ACS), this survey was fully implemented in 2005 and the decennial long-form was eliminated beginning with the 2010 Census. Since then, the ACS has served as the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation.

The ACS collects data regularly throughout each year, sampling about 290,000 mailable housing unit addresses in each monthly panel. As a result, in census years some households are asked to complete both the ACS and the decennial census around the same time. There is concern that some people in these households may not recognize that they are being asked to respond to two distinct requests from the Census Bureau, supported by evidence that the census has had an impact on ACS response rates in previous census years (Chesnut and Davis 2011; Baumgardner 2013). In 2000, self-response to the ACS increased early in the year prior to census day (April 1) and then declined in the months after census day. It has been hypothesized that respondents who received the ACS prior to the census may have thought the ACS was the first request to complete the census and thus eagerly completed it. On the other hand, respondents who received the census before the ACS may have thought the ACS was an additional mailing about the census and disregarded it because they thought they had already completed it.

After observing this trend in 2000, the Census Bureau developed alternative 2010 ACS mailing materials with the goal of minimizing the impact of the census on ACS response rates. In these alternative materials, it was explained to respondents that the ACS was different from the 2010 Census and that respondents were required to complete both. Multiple letter and envelope changes were cognitively tested (Schwede 2013), and then three treatments were field tested in 2010. The treatments were compared to each other and to the standard 2010 ACS production materials, which did not attempt to differentiate the ACS from the 2010 Census. All of the treatments improved ACS participation compared to the production materials (Chesnut and Davis 2011). The Census Bureau also developed and cognitively tested a field flier that ACS field representatives (FRs) could use during computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) data collection to further differentiate the ACS from the 2010 Census (Schwede and Sorokin 2010). This flier was viewed positively by FRs, who reported using it frequently.

Since this was successful, the Census Bureau planned to implement similar revisions to the ACS mailing materials and to use a field flier during the next census in 2020. We were unable to re-use the same materials used in 2010 for the planned 2020 mailings due to changes in methodology that occurred in the years since. For example, in 2010, ACS and census self-response was collected only via paper questionnaire; in 2020, both ACS and the census encouraged households to respond on the internet. There have also been other changes to the mailings for both the ACS and the census as a result of expert review, qualitative research, and field testing conducted since 2010.

As a result, new materials needed to be developed and cognitively tested for 2020. An interdivisional Census Bureau review team used the 2018 ACS production materials as a starting point to update the materials for 2020. The team’s primary goal was to implement changes to the 2018 materials that were as similar as possible to those made to the successful alternate 2010 ACS materials. However, some further changes were made to increase clarity or the salience of the distinction between the ACS and the decennial census. In this report, we describe the changes that were made and the results of cognitive testing of these materials. We also make recommendations for further changes to the materials and describe how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the use of the recommended materials.

3 MATERIALS

3.1 ACS Mailing Materials

In 2018, the ACS sent all mailable¹ sampled addresses at least two pieces of mail and up to five separate mailings. Each mailing is unique and some contain multiple components. The first 2018 mailing was a package that included a letter, an internet response instruction card, a frequently asked questions (FAQ) brochure, and a multilingual information brochure. About a week later, addresses received a “pressure seal”² reminder letter. After this second mailing, addresses from which the Census Bureau has received an ACS response no longer received mail about the survey.

Addresses from which the Census Bureau had not received a response as of the mailing date for the third mailing were sent the questionnaire package about two weeks after the pressure seal reminder. As in the first mailing, the third mailing included a letter, an internet response instruction card, and a FAQ brochure. It also included a paper questionnaire and return envelope. There was no multilingual brochure in this mailing. Next, addresses received a reminder postcard a few days later requesting a response. After this fourth mailing, addresses from which the Census Bureau had received an ACS response no longer received mail about the survey. Finally, addresses from which the Census Bureau had not received a response as of the mailing date of the fifth mailing were sent a final mailing a couple weeks later, which was a pressure seal reminder letter similar to the second mailing.

For the purposes of this project, the review team chose to focus primarily on the components that were modified in 2010, which included the envelopes, letters, and postcard. The team also made changes to the pressure seal mailers, which were not a part of the ACS mailing strategy in 2010. We elected not to make changes to the questionnaire or supplemental materials (the instruction card, FAQ brochure, multilingual information brochure, and return envelope). Table

¹ Mailable addresses are those that meet certain United States Post Office standards for mail delivery (see <https://pe.usps.com/cpim/ftp/pubs/pub28/pub28.pdf> for more information). Unmailable addresses begin with in-person data collection.

² Respondents must tear strips of paper off three sides of the pressure seal in order to open the letter (see Appendix 8.1).

1 below summarizes the major changes made to each of these mailings; materials are also shown in Appendix 8.1.

Table 1. Revisions to ACS 2020 Mailings for Cognitive Testing³

Mailing	Mailing type	Changes cognitively tested for 2020
1	Initial mailing package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language emphasizing the ACS (“The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey”) was added to the front of the envelope above the address window. • The Census Bureau logo was added to the back of the envelope. • The letter was modified to include language explaining the difference between ACS and the 2020 Census and that response to both is required. • A FAQ section was added to the back of the letter.
2	Pressure seal reminder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text was added to the front that reads, “The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.” • Text inside the mailer was added to explain the difference between ACS and the 2020 Census and that response to both is required.
3	Questionnaire package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The look-and-feel of the front of the envelope was changed as in the initial mailing. • The Census Bureau logo as well as a few sentences explaining the difference between ACS and the 2020 Census and that response to both is required was added to the back of the envelope. Two versions of the back of the envelope were developed for cognitive testing. • The letter was modified to include language explaining the difference between ACS and the 2020 Census

³ A decision was made to update the look-and-feel of the envelope return address and letter header for ACS mailings independently of this group. Thus, all materials also included this change.

		<p>and that response to both is required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A FAQ section was added to the back of the letter. The content was similar to the FAQs in the initial package but the FAQs included more white space.
4	Postcard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sentence was added to the back of the postcard explaining that response to both the ACS and the 2020 Census is required by law.
5	Pressure seal reminder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text was added to the front that reads “The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey.” • A minor wording change was made to the inside of the letter to clarify that this mailing was for the ACS.

3.2 ACS Field Flier

In 2018, the Census Bureau used FRs to conduct nonresponse followup with a subsample of addresses from which a response has not been received after all five mailings were sent. This followup was conducted via CAPI. The FRs used a variety of materials to encourage response to the ACS during CAPI; in 2010, this included a flier specifically differentiating the ACS from the 2010 Census. This flier was two-sided. On one side, respondents were shown FAQs on topics such as the difference between the ACS and the census and why answers cannot be shared between the census and ACS. On the other side, respondents were shown images of the ACS and the 2010 Census paper questionnaires with information about what questions were asked on each.

Using the 2010 flier as a starting point, the review team reflected changes in ACS and census methodology (e.g., the use of the internet to collect responses) and improved the flier’s clarity. The overall look-and-feel was also updated to match current Census Bureau style guidelines (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Table 2 below summarizes the changes made to the flier; the flier is also shown in Appendix 8.2.

Table 2. Revisions to ACS Field Flier for 2020

Flier side	Changes cognitively tested
FAQ side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first FAQ was edited to be phrased in a more positive way (versus “Didn’t I already answer the census?” in 2010) and the answer to this question was simplified. • The second FAQ was slightly re-phrased, and a reference to the frequency in which the ACS is conducted was removed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information was added to the third FAQ to explain how responses are used. • Examples of ACS questions not asked on the census were added to the fourth FAQ to mirror the other side of the flier. • A “thank you” sentence was added to the bottom of the flier. • Other minor grammar and stylistic changes were made.
Questionnaire image side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References to and images of the census questionnaire were removed, due to uncertainty about the final appearance of the 2020 Census web instrument and paper form at the time of testing. • Text was clarified to explain that ACS responses can be collected online or on paper. • The image of the ACS paper form was updated to the most recent form and a screenshot of the ACS internet instrument was added.

4 STUDY METHODOLOGY

We conducted 20 cognitive interviews in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area in October 2018. Cognitive interviews were conducted in-person by four experienced interviewers from the Center for Behavioral Science Methods (CBSM) who were trained on the cognitive interview protocol prior to testing. The goal of the cognitive interviews was to determine whether the revised materials were successful in communicating that the ACS and the 2020 Census are different and that response to both is mandatory. We were also specifically interested in which components of the messaging successfully conveyed those messages. Our research questions were:

1. Did participants understand that the ACS was different from the decennial census? If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
2. Did participants understand that they were required to complete both the ACS and the census? If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
3. Did participants notice and understand the language on the flap of the third mailing envelope? Was one version of the flap wording more successful than the other in getting participants to understand that the ACS is different from the census and that they are required to complete both?
4. Did the FAQs answer the questions that participants had? What questions did participants have that were not answered by the FAQs?
5. After seeing the field flier, did participants understand that the ACS was different than the census?

4.1 Recruitment

Participants were recruited using posts on Craigslist.com and NextDoor.com. All participants were screened by CBSM staff on the telephone prior to participation. Only those who indicated either that they are the only household member who handles the mail or that they share that

responsibility with others were eligible to participate. Potential participants who indicated someone else in their household usually handles the mail were not eligible. We implemented this restriction in order to screen out people who may be unlikely to see ACS mailing materials. We also targeted participants who read at different literacy levels, using education as a proxy measure. Finally, we attempted to interview people who were diverse on demographic and household characteristics such as race, sex, age, household income, household size, tenure (own/rent), and household composition (i.e., whether there were any unrelated household members) to the maximum extent possible. Each cognitive interview participant received \$40.

4.2 Cognitive Interview Participants

Participants were fairly balanced on sex and diverse in terms of age, income, and education (see Table 3). Most participants were black or African American. In terms of household characteristics, participants were fairly diverse on household size, and similar numbers of participants owned or rented their housing units. Most participants lived with related household members.

Table 3. Cognitive Interview Participant Characteristics

Demographic characteristics	Participants (n = 20)
Race	
White (non-Hispanic)	5
White (Hispanic)	2
Black or African American	13
Sex	
Male	9
Female	11
Family income⁴	
Less than \$15,000	5
\$15,000 to \$24,999	3
\$25,000 to \$49,999	2
\$50,000 to \$99,999	5
\$100,000 or higher	4
Age	
18-30	2
31-45	6
46-55	6
56-65	2
Over 65	4
Education	
Less than high school	1
Completed high school	5
Some college, no degree	4
Associate's degree (AA/AS)	0
Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	5
Post-Bachelor's degree	5
Household size⁵	
1	4
2	7
3	4
4+	4
Lives with unrelated household members⁶	
Yes	5
No	12
Own/Rent	
Own	9
Rent	11

⁴ One person was asked an older version of this question; their income was less than \$25,000.

⁵ This information is unavailable for 1 participant.

⁶ This information is unavailable for 3 participants. We included participants who live alone in the “no” responses.

4.3 Data Collection

The cognitive interviews were designed to test the revised ACS mailing materials in the context of draft 2020 Census mailing materials (see Appendix 8.3), following the format used by Schwede (2013) to test materials prior to the 2010 Census. Each cognitive interview lasted approximately one hour. Upon arrival to the interview, participants were told that the purpose of the interview was to test mailing materials that the Census Bureau planned to use in 2020 (see Appendix 8.4). The interviewer did not mention the 2020 Census or the ACS. Participants were also given a consent form to sign and were told that information they provided would be confidential, that the interview would be recorded⁷, and that the interview was being observed, when applicable.

Cognitive interviews were conducted using printed drafts of the mailing materials assembled into mailing packages as they were planned to appear in 2020 pre-COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were presented with mail packages individually in the approximate order that they would have been received by households sampled for the ACS as part of the April 2020 panel and in the 2020 Census Internet First cohort #3⁸ (see Table 4). This ACS panel was also chosen in the 2010 cognitive testing because it represented a potential “worst case scenario” for ACS respondents in that they would receive mail from the ACS and the decennial census interspersed in the same time period, with decennial census mailing materials arriving first. We anticipated this might be the time of the year in which respondents would be most prone to conflating ACS and census.⁹

Table 4. Order of Mailing Materials Used for Cognitive Interviews (Planned April 2020 ACS Panel/2020 Census Internet First Cohort #3)

Mailing	Approximate mailing date (planned)	ACS/2020 Census	Mailing type
1	3/19/2020	2020 Census #1	Letter
2	3/23/2020	2020 Census #2	Letter
3	3/26/2020	ACS #1	Initial mailing package
4	4/2/2020	2020 Census #3	Postcard
5	4/2/2020	ACS #2	Pressure seal reminder
6	4/15/2020	2020 Census #4	Questionnaire package
7	4/16/2020	ACS #3	Questionnaire package
8	4/20/2020	ACS #4	Postcard
9	4/27/2020	2020 Census #5	Postcard
10	5/7/2020	ACS #5	Pressure seal reminder

⁷ Interviews that took place at Census Bureau headquarters were both video and audio recorded; off-site interviews were audio-recorded only.

⁸ The Census Bureau planned to stagger mailings for the 2020 Census into multiple cohorts to reduce high call peaks for call centers (Pennington, Bentley, and Walejko 2018). “Internet first” referred to the strategy of encouraging response online before offering a paper questionnaire. The third internet first cohort received the first mailing about the census a week after the first internet first cohort received mail.

⁹ Because of constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, this mailing strategy could not be implemented for the April 2020 panel; the panel did not receive any ACS mailings.

The mailing materials shown were identical across interviews with one exception. Ten participants saw one version of the ACS questionnaire package mailing envelope, and the other half saw an alternate version of this envelope. The envelopes differed in the language displayed on the back flap on the envelope (see Appendix 8.1).

Cognitive interviewers asked participants to verbalize their thoughts, or “think aloud,” during the cognitive interviews (Willis 2015). Interviewers observed participants’ interactions with these mailing materials but did not ask probing questions while participants were looking at them other than to encourage participants to think aloud (see Appendix 8.4). Probing questions on the mailing materials were administered retrospectively in two places: after the fifth mailing material was shown to participants, and after the last mailing material was shown. We probed after the fifth mailing because of its natural midpoint in the ACS and 2020 Census data collection methodologies; households that respond to the ACS and 2020 Census before mailing deadlines will not receive the sixth through tenth mailings. Breaking up the probing questions also gave us an opportunity to get in-depth participant reactions to earlier mailings that may have gotten lost after a number of additional mailings were shown.

After participants viewed all mailing materials, interviewers asked probing questions about specific features of interest on the ACS materials, such as the questionnaire package envelope flap and the FAQs on the back of the letters in the initial mailing and questionnaire packages. At this time, participants were shown the version of the questionnaire package envelope they had not yet seen and were asked to compare the two. Participants then thought aloud while reviewing a print-out of the ACS field flier. The interview concluded with questions about participants’ impressions of the flier as well as general debriefing questions, such as if the mailing materials could be improved to better communicate that the ACS and the 2020 Census are different and that response to both is mandatory.

4.1 Analysis

Interviewers completed individual summaries for each of the interviews they conducted using a standard template. Personally identifiable information (PII) such as names were not included in the summaries and participants were referred to using ID numbers. Summaries included interviewer observations on how the participant interacted with each material (e.g., what they looked at and how closely they read the materials), think aloud feedback from participants, and responses to probing questions. Researchers also provided high-level responses to the five research questions for each participant. All summaries were compiled into one document which researchers independently reviewed. We then held a consensus meeting to answer the research questions, summarize results, and agree on a set of recommendations for production materials. The compiled summary document and discussion from this meeting formed the basis of the cognitive interview findings.

5 COGNITIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 *Differentiation of the ACS and the 2020 Census*

Many of the changes to the 2020 ACS mailing materials were made to better distinguish the ACS from the census, either explicitly by telling respondents the ACS is different from the census or indirectly by emphasizing the name of the ACS. This included changes to the envelopes, letters, postcards, and pressure seal mailers. We wanted to know whether participants generally recognized that they received mail for both the ACS and the 2020 Census, as well as which components of the ACS mailings best communicated this distinction. In this section, we provide a high-level overview of comments participants generally made about the distinction between the ACS and the census as well as briefly describe the comments they made in response to each of the mailings.

5.1.1 Findings

5.1.1.1 General Comments

The majority of cognitive interview participants indicated that they generally understood some of the mail they looked at was for the 2020 Census and some of it was for the ACS. Most of these participants spontaneously made comments about this while reviewing the mailings:

“Oh, this is different from the census.”

“This is different from the main other survey [referring to census].”

However, for a couple of participants it was not clear that they picked up on this distinction until we explicitly asked during probing at the end of the interview. There were also a couple of interviews in which we were still not sure that participants understood this distinction even after being asked additional probing questions. Many of the participants in the interviews who did not notice the distinction between the ACS and the census (or who may not have noticed it) tended to skim through the materials quickly without reading. A couple of these participants also had a lower level of educational attainment.

There were also a couple of participants who seemed to think that at least some of the ACS mailings were being sent on behalf of both the ACS and the 2020 Census. One of these participants did not understand the distinction between the ACS and the census throughout the cognitive interview.

“Well I [saw] in the brochure, it was saying ‘American Community’ AND the ‘2020 Census.’ So I figured it was all together - I thought it was like one whole thing. I thought they were sending them like as a package.”

“Some of them say ‘both,’ and some are tailored just to one.”

5.1.1.2 Initial Mailing

Cognitive interview participants saw the initial ACS mailing after being shown two letters for the 2020 Census. Several changes were made to this mailing to emphasize the name of the ACS and how it is different from the census, including on the front and back of the envelope and the front and back of the letter.

Some participants commented that their first reaction was that this was “another piece of mail.” However, once they started to look at it more closely, most participants then realized that this piece of mail was different from the previous pieces of mail they had seen:

“And this is now a community survey. It seems to be about something quite different than the census.”

“Okay, American Community Survey, think that’s different this time.”

Participants commented on this distinction in a number of different places, though most people commented on it while they were looking at the front of the envelope or reviewing the front of the letter. Language about addresses being randomly selected for the ACS seemed to resonate with many participants. It seemed to help participants distinguish the ACS from the census.

“That’s a good letter. At least the front of it. Hits all the main points. Including saying you were randomly selected, we’re not selecting just you, just whoever lives here.”

“Oh they choose it, they randomly choose it. Okay. So maybe they use your address, so depending on where you live they use your address to see where in your neighborhood you might need a school or assistance or hospitals, stuff like that.”

Most participants did not look at the FAQs on the back of the letter; however, they were successful in helping those who did look at them understand the distinction between the ACS and the census (see Section 5.3 for more discussion of the FAQs):

“A good Q&A back here-- why this is different from the census itself.”

“Okay, they do this every year, they do that every 10 years. Okay, I see the difference.”

“This is a survey that has to deal with something a little different from just the census itself.”

“It says it is different from the 2020 Census... Oh, this is about social and economic needs.”

Additionally, a couple of participants each commented on this distinction while looking at the FAQ brochure, language brochure, or instruction card, although no changes were made to these materials to help distinguish the ACS from the census. Some participants commented on the distinction more than once while looking at different pieces of the initial mailing. A couple of

participants noticed the previous mailings they had seen for the census were mostly blue while this mailing was mostly green. No participants commented on the Census Bureau logo on the back of the envelope.

While many participants correctly picked up on the distinction between the ACS and the census, a few participants understood that this mailing was somehow different from the others but could not quite articulate why. One participant said he thought there were two censuses from “different companies,” while another participant seemed to think that the ACS was sent to a sub-sample of census respondents.

There were also a few instances in which participants suggested that we add text explaining the difference between the ACS and the census in places where we had already done so. For example, one participant suggested putting text about what questions the ACS asks on the front of the letter. Another participant commented:

“Let people know on the envelope that this is different from the census. This is an addition or however you want to call it. Because a lot of people are like, ‘oh, I’ve already done this. I did that two weeks ago, I don’t know why they’re sending me this, rip,’ and out it goes. I don’t know how you would do it. ‘This is not the census, this is...’ Worded nicely.”

This mailing generated the most comments about the distinction between the ACS and the census of all of the ACS mailings. We suspect this may be because it was the first ACS mailing they saw and also because there were a number of places within this mailing in which language was added to help participants pick up on this distinction.

5.1.1.3 First Pressure Seal Reminder

After reviewing the initial ACS mailing, participants viewed a postcard for the 2020 Census and then saw the second ACS mailing, a pressure seal reminder. Changes were made to both the front and inside of this mailing to emphasize the difference between the ACS and the census. At this point in the interview, some participants were starting to feel overwhelmed by the amount of mail they would have received from both the census and the ACS:

“Another piece of mail [laughs].”

“I get it, I see what’s going on here with the additional reminders, but it’s still a lot.”

Participants also commented on the pressure seal format of this mailing, with many participants saying that this mailing looked like a check or some sort of other official document:

“Are they sending me a check in the mail?”

A few participants also commented that they wished there were some sort of due date for response included in these materials:

“They don’t give a date when the response has to be given by.”

Fewer participants commented on the distinction between the ACS and the census while reviewing this mailing than they did while reviewing the first mailing. Participants who did comment on this distinction were fairly evenly split in whether they commented on it while viewing the front of the pressure seal or the inside of the pressure seal.

5.1.1.4 Questionnaire Package

After reviewing the ACS pressure seal reminder, participants were asked some probing questions about the first pieces of mail that they saw. They then viewed the questionnaire package for the 2020 Census and next saw the third ACS mailing, which is also a questionnaire package. Similar changes were made to this mailing as were made in the first ACS mailing, including changes to the front and back of both the envelope and the letter. Two different versions of the back of the envelope were tested (see Section 5.4 for further discussion).

As with the first mailing, many participants commented on this mailing being for the ACS. Participants tended to comment on the distinction between the ACS and the census while reviewing the envelope or looking at the paper questionnaire. One participant commented on the difference while reviewing the front of the letter. No participants commented on the FAQs on the back of the letter or on the language that was added to the back of the envelope (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4).

“I see the American Community Survey, so I know it’s a different thing.”

“Oh, wow. So now they sent the survey, the American Community Survey, okay.”

Most participants immediately noticed that this mailing was thicker than the previous ones they received, with some participants commenting that it was bulky or heavy.

“Ugh! That’s my first response. Ugh! [picked up and dropped envelope multiple times to emphasize its size and weight].”

Participants continued to make comments about the size of the package as they opened the envelope. Many participants commented that the questionnaire seemed long. This difference in the questionnaires seemed to help distinguish the ACS from the census:

“Oh, this is thicker. They have a little more information in here... Okay, so this one asks more questions than the first one, so this may be a little more time consuming than the first one.”

“Oh, [wow], this is heavy duty. They sure [are] asking a whole lot of questions.”

While participants understood that there were two different requests, there were a few participants who commented that they were not sure why the ACS and the census had to be conducted separately since they seemed very similar:

“This is basically the 2020 Census questionnaire...It’s like you’re having a person fill out the same thing for two different reasons...but why? You got two different names.”

This mailing generated the second most comments about the distinction between the ACS and the census of all of the ACS mailings, possibly because this ACS mailing included a paper questionnaire and also because there were a number of places in this mailing where language was added to help participants pick up on this distinction.

5.1.1.5 Reminder Postcard

Participants saw the fourth ACS mailing, a reminder postcard, immediately after reviewing the ACS questionnaire package. A small change was made to this mailing on the back of the postcard; no changes were made to the front of the postcard.

Very few participants made any comments about the distinction between the ACS and the census while viewing this postcard. They may have felt fatigued because this was the eighth piece of mail they had seen during the cognitive interview. The lack of comments may have also been because the changes made to this postcard were relatively minimal. Only one of the participants who commented on the difference between the ACS and the census did so while looking at the front of the postcard; the other participants who commented did so while looking at the back of the postcard.

Participants generally felt like this mailing was “just a reminder,” and many indicated they thought they would have already responded by the time they received this mailing.

“Once again this is your reminder to remind you to please fill it out.”

“Okay it wants you to complete the survey, send it in.”

As a result, some people thought they would disregard this postcard or throw it away.

A couple of participants were unsure whether this postcard was for the ACS, for the census, or for both. One participant wondered why the ACS and census could not send mailings together. Another participant thought this mailing was for the census at first until they saw language about the ACS:

“Again, I thought this was about the census at first, but I see it’s about the American Community Survey...it doesn’t say anything about it on the front... there’s nothing bold that says ‘American Community Survey.’”

There were also a few comments from participants about the fact that this mailing did not contain any log-in information for the internet instrument.

5.1.1.6 Second Pressure Seal Reminder

Finally, participants reviewed a postcard for the 2020 Census and then saw the last ACS mailing, another pressure seal reminder. Only very small changes were made to both the front and inside of the pressure seal reminder to emphasize the ACS; otherwise, this mailing remained fairly similar to the one being used in production. This mailing does not reference the 2020 Census specifically.

As with the previous ACS mailings, participants commented that this was another reminder and the pressure seal format of the mailing made it seem important. Some participants thought that this mailing would not apply to them because they would have already responded, and many commented they would disregard the mailing or throw it out. A few participants thought this mailing might be an acknowledgment that their response had been received before they opened the pressure seal and looked inside.

“Your response is important.’ I already did it. If there’s a way I could... ‘If you have completed the survey...’ That’s what I’ll do! I’m a call y’all, let you know I already did it... If not, want me to do it again, I’ll do it again because I thought I did it.”

“I wouldn’t be too upset about it, because it said if I sent it, thank you, if I haven’t, it’s just a reminder.”

Fewer than half of participants commented on the distinction between the ACS and the census when reviewing this mailing, similarly to what we observed with the first pressure seal mailing. All but one of the participants who commented on this difference did so while reviewing the inside of the mailing. A couple of these participants thought that perhaps this language could be strengthened:

“You need to make this stand out. If I was getting both things, I’d read that quickly and not pay attention.”

“People need to know...what’s the difference between the American Community Survey and the [census]. Maybe in the previous mailings, spell it out more. Like in the letter, not just in a brochure or something.”

5.1.2 Recommendations

Overall, the changes to the mailings seemed to effectively communicate to most participants that the ACS is different from the census. Participants noticed this distinction in different mailings and at different places in these mailings, but we received the most comments about the distinction while participants were reviewing the first and third ACS mailings. In particular, the front of the envelope and the front of the letters effectively communicated this message. Since these changes worked for most participants, we recommended only a few slight global changes that might help

participants who did not notice the distinction or who may not have noticed it. Recommendations specific to the FAQs on the back of letters and the back of the envelopes are made in Sections 5.3 and 5.4, respectively.

We recommended further emphasizing “the American Community Survey” using bolded text throughout the mailings. Bold text is already used in some of the mailings, but its use is inconsistent. In some mailings, ACS is bolded along with “2020 Census,” in other mailings it is not bolded at all, and in one mailing (the postcard) “2020 Census” is bolded but ACS is not. Consistently bolding “ACS” could be particularly helpful for participants who only skim or glance at the mailing materials.

Additionally, we recommended re-considering the use of the word “both” throughout the mailings, since a couple of participants seemed to think the ACS mailings were being sent on behalf of both the ACS and the decennial census. Most of the mailings (with the exception of the second pressure seal reminder) reference both the ACS and the census, both in messaging distinguishing the ACS from the census and about response to the census and the ACS being mandatory. We recommended dropping this word entirely or removing the bolded emphasis from it in the mailing materials so that it is clearer that these mailings are for the ACS.

5.2 Mandatory Response

All of the production ACS mailings already include language about response to the survey being mandatory. Therefore, changes made to the mailings to communicate that response to *both* the ACS and the census is mandatory were relatively minor. As with the language differentiating the ACS from the census, we made changes to the envelopes, letters, postcards, and pressure seal mailers. We wanted to know whether participants generally recognized that response was mandatory for both the ACS and the 2020 Census, as well as which components of the mailings best communicated this. In this section, we provide a high-level overview of comments participants generally made about response to the ACS and the census being mandatory as well as briefly describe the comments they made in response to each of the mailings.

5.2.1 Findings

5.2.1.1 General Comments

While not all of the cognitive interview participants understood the distinction between the ACS and the census, virtually all clearly understood that response to these mailings was mandatory:

“Here we go again, response to both is required by law.”

“I better go online and see since it says I’m required to do this by law.”

In one interview, it was unclear whether one participant knew that response to both the ACS and census was mandatory because she read most of the mailings out loud verbatim and struggled to answer some of the probing questions.

A couple of participants made comments about how they were not sure how mandatory response would be enforced or that they did not know what the consequences would be if they did not complete the census and/or the ACS:

“Never heard of somebody going to jail for not doing the census.”

“I’m thinking, if I don’t fill it out, what [are] the consequences?”

Otherwise, this messaging was noticed and clearly understood by participants.

5.2.1.2 Initial Mailing

In the initial mailing, language about response to both the ACS and the census being required by law was added to the front of the letter and in the FAQs that were added to the back of the letter. We did not change the language on the front of the envelope about mandatory response, which reads “your response is required by law.”

About half of the cognitive interview participants commented on response being required while reviewing this mailing, with some participants commenting on this more than once.

One participant commented that he did not know that response was required until the cognitive interview, and a couple of participants commented that they did not like that response is required by law:

“I don’t like that, what do you mean... my response to both the American Community Survey and the 2020 is required by law. How can it be required by law if I don’t want to do it? I don’t see why that’s breaking the law.”

Another participant asked what happens if you do not respond. Otherwise, participants tended to just acknowledge that they saw this language and then continued reading the materials included in this mailing.

Participants tended to comment on this right away while reviewing the front of the envelope or the front of the letter. A few participants commented on it while reviewing the FAQs on the back of the letter. Despite the fact that no changes were made to the other production materials to emphasize that response to both is required, one participant each commented on this while reviewing other materials, with one commenting on it while looking at the language brochure and the other commenting on it while reviewing the FAQ brochure.

5.2.1.3 First Pressure Seal Reminder

We did not make any changes to the front of the first pressure seal reminder to emphasize mandatory response. However, small changes were made on the inside of this letter to emphasize that response to both the ACS and the census is mandatory.

Some cognitive interview participants commented on response being required while reviewing this mailing, though fewer participants commented on this than they did in the initial mailing package.

“Good. I like the bold, ‘your response to both is required by law.’ That’s good.”

“Okay, so you have to do it.”

As in the initial mailing, some participants commented that they did not like that response was required by law or that they felt like they had been shown this message too many times across the census and ACS mailings:

“I told you I’m gonna do it. You all are pressing me out. Okay, alright, I’m gonna do it. I got you. I’m not gonna let you all down.”

A few participants noticed that there was not any language on the front of the pressure seal mailer about response being required as there was in the previous census and ACS mailings. One participant said he would not open this mailing because it did not have that language.

“This one doesn’t have the, ‘you’re going to get in trouble if you don’t do it.’”

“See, now it [doesn’t] say it’s required by law.”

Not surprisingly, almost all of the participants who commented on response being required did so while reading the inside of the pressure seal mailer.

5.2.1.4 Questionnaire Package

Changes made to the questionnaire package to emphasize that response to the ACS and the census is mandatory were similar to those made to the initial mailing. Language was added to the front of the letter and FAQs were added to the back of the letter. As with the initial mailing, we did not change the language on the front of the envelope about mandatory response, which reads “your response is required by law.” Unlike the first mailing, language was also added to the back of the envelope. Two different versions of this language were tested, but only one version explicitly stated that response to the ACS and census is mandatory (see Section 5.4 for further discussion).

A similar number of participants commented on response being required as did in response to the first pressure seal reminder. Participants did not have much to add while reviewing this mailing and tended to just generally acknowledge that response was required. One participant suggested bolding that response is required in the letter (this text was already bolded). Another participant was not initially sure whether the ACS was required until he read the mailing more closely:

“The first one [the census] was a mandate; I had to do it. This one was randomly selected for me. Is this still a mandate?”

One participant commented on response being required while reviewing the front of the letter and one commented on it while reviewing the back of the letter with the FAQs. All other participants who commented did so while reviewing the front of the envelope. No participants commented on the language on the back of the envelope (see Section 5.4).

5.2.1.5 Reminder Postcard

No changes were made to this mailing on the front of the postcard. A small change was made on the back of the postcard to remind respondents that response to both the ACS and the census is required by law.

Only a few participants commented on response being required while reviewing the postcard, and all who did so made these comments while reviewing the back of the postcard. Participants generally repeated previous comments while reviewing the postcard. One participant asked why this mailing material did not mention response being required on the front of the postcard.

5.2.1.6 Second Pressure Seal Reminder

The last ACS mailing was unique in the cognitive testing in that it does not specifically reference the 2020 Census on the front or inside of the letter. We did not make any changes to the production version of this letter to emphasize that response to both the census and the ACS is required by law. However, it does inform respondents that response to the ACS is required by law.

A similar number of participants commented on response being required by law while reviewing this mailing as did while reviewing the initial mailing, first pressure seal reminder, and questionnaire package. Participants again tended to simply reiterate that they noticed this language:

“Here’s another one of the, ‘you’re required by law to respond to the American Community Survey, response is critically important.’ It’s telling me to fill it out because it’s important.”

These comments were made while participants were reviewing the inside of the pressure seal reminder. A few participants also commented that they would have already responded by the time they would receive this mailing because response is required by law.

5.2.2 Recommendations

Participants noticed and understood the language communicating that response to both the ACS and the census is mandatory. Participants noticed this messaging throughout the mailings and at different places in each of these mailings. Similar numbers of comments were made across the mailings with the exception of the postcard, which generated fewer comments. The messaging

about response being required on the front of the initial mailing and questionnaire package envelopes was particularly noticeable for participants.

We did not recommend any overall changes to the mailing materials to emphasize that response to both is mandatory. Recommendations specific to the FAQs on the back of letters and the back of the envelopes are made in Sections 5.3 and 5.4, respectively.

5.3 FAQs

FAQs were added to the back of the letters in the initial mailing package and the questionnaire package. These FAQs were similar, but not identical. The FAQs in the questionnaire package were spaced out further, and there was also an additional sentence in the first FAQ about the information that the ACS collects (see Figure 1). We wanted to know if participants noticed the FAQs, whether the FAQs successfully explained the difference between the ACS and the census and that response to both is mandatory, if there were any additional FAQs that should be added, and which version, if any, of the FAQs was preferred by participants.

Figure 1. Letter FAQs

Version 1 (first ACS mailing):

I already answered the 2020 Census. Is this the same thing?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year. The Census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

Do I have to answer both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census?

Yes, your response to both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code). Your responses will help your community get its fair share of federal funding. The data help determine how more than \$675 billion is distributed to states and communities each year.

Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?

No, your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions that are not asked by the 2020 Census, such as: education, employment, health insurance, internet access, and transportation.

Version 2 (third ACS mailing):

I already answered the 2020 Census. Is this the same thing?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census.

The ACS shows how we live – our education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs to your community every year.

The Census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

Do I have to answer both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census?

Yes, your response to both is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code).

Your responses will help your community get its fair share of federal funding. The data help determine how more than \$675 billion is distributed to states and communities each year.

Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?

No, your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions that are not asked by the 2020 Census, such as: education, employment, health insurance, internet access, and transportation.

5.3.1 Findings

5.3.1.1 General Comments

Participants were not instructed to look at the FAQs while they were interacting with the mailing packages. Instead, interviewers observed whether participants noticed the FAQs, and if so, how closely they looked at them. Later, in the debriefing section, participants were directly asked whether they had seen the FAQs if interviewers were not sure whether they had or not. Participants who had not read the FAQs while interacting with the mailing packages were also asked to do so during probing.

About half of participants reported seeing the FAQs in the initial mailing. Slightly more participants reported seeing the FAQs in the first mailing than in the third mailing questionnaire package. However, not everyone remembered the FAQs well or read them closely:

"Nope. I didn't even read that back part. I [saw] the questions but I didn't read."

"I don't think I did... Oh, I did read this the first time."

One participant said they only saw the FAQs because they "happened" to flip over the page; this participant said she thought there should be text on the front alerting people to their presence on the back of the page. Another participant who did not see the FAQs admitted she could see through the front of the page that there was text on the back of the page but that she did not flip it over to read them.

There were a couple of participants who still had questions or did not seem to fully understand why the ACS was distinct from the census when asked probes about the FAQs:

"Why are we doing two surveys instead of just combining them all into one?"

One participant also commented that they found the last FAQ on why the census and the ACS cannot share responses "confusing," but was unable to elaborate on why he thought that was the case.

However, overall participants generally understood the FAQs and thought they were fairly standard. Almost everyone noticed that the FAQs differentiated the ACS from the census and explained that response to both was required:

"They're basically saying it's not the same thing and you have to respond to both."

"Well they're trying to get across, let you know that this is a different program, different thing that they're doing."

"It's just explaining that the American Community Survey is different than the Census and is required."

After reviewing the FAQs during probing, one participant said she thought the FAQ brochure answered these questions. Another participant said she would prefer a bulleted format for the FAQs.

5.3.1.2 New FAQs to be added

We asked participants whether there were any questions they thought should be added to the FAQs. The majority of participants said they could not think of any additional questions to add, but some participants who had suggestions had more than one. Only one participant made a FAQ suggestion related to language differentiating the ACS from the census. This participant suggested adding language about why the ACS has to be conducted at the same time as the census.

About half of the other suggestions made by participants were regarding practical information about completing the ACS. Two participants suggested adding a FAQ about how long it would take them to complete the ACS. Other suggestions included telling respondents if they will need to prepare anything or collect information to complete the ACS online, providing more information about the different response mode options, and giving a response deadline. The other half of the suggestions were about elaborating on how ACS data are used, such as providing more information about confidentiality protections and how the \$675 billion in federal funding that the ACS helps allocate is spent. One participant wondered how the example ACS questions listed in the third FAQ (education, employment, health insurance, internet access, and transportation) were chosen. Another participant said it would be nice to reiterate response information for non-English speakers in the FAQs.

5.3.1.3 Comparing Version 1 and Version 2

A few participants spontaneously noticed that the FAQs in the questionnaire package had more spacing or that the wording of the first FAQ was slightly different between the two mailings. We also explicitly asked which version of the FAQs participants preferred, if any. Only two participants preferred the version used in the initial mailing. Both of these participants said they preferred the more condensed format of the first FAQ in the initial mailing. One of these participants said that she did not think spacing out the content made it any easier to read. The other participant commented that the spacing pattern seemed strange to her in the version used in the questionnaire package:

"[The first version] is more...cohesive. Like, if all the words are going to be together [for the last FAQ], it should be like that for all of them. It shouldn't be like, these ones are spaced [points to first and second FAQs], and then [the last one is] together [points to last question], because then it looks like a mistake."

One participant said both versions were clear. The remaining participants preferred the version used in the questionnaire package, with many people commenting that they liked the additional

spacing. A few people also thought the questionnaire package version was clearer and that the additional information about the ACS helped better explain the difference between the ACS and the census:

“It didn’t make me feel like I’m reading as much. It’s the same information, but it’s just, you’ve got some spacing in between it.”

“[In the first version] it’s just all jumbled up.”

“It’s spaced out... it’s much better.”

5.3.2 Recommendations

Overall, we found that the FAQs provided useful information for participants who read them. However, if the printing of the FAQs is logistically difficult or cost-prohibitive, they may not be necessary to include since many participants did not notice them or read them. We recommended using the FAQs from the questionnaire package mailing for both the initial mailing and questionnaire package since they were preferred by participants, and we did not have any recommendations for new FAQs to add.

5.4 Envelope Flaps

Another change made to the questionnaire package mailing was the addition of the Census Bureau logo and language about the ACS to the back flap of the envelope. Two versions were tested; both of which explained the difference between the ACS and the census. Only the first version explicitly stated that response was required (see Figure 2). We observed participants’ interaction with one randomly assigned version of the envelope flap and then presented the other flap during follow-up probing. Similarly to the FAQs, we wanted to know if participants noticed the envelope flaps, whether the language on the flaps succeeded in explaining the difference between ACS and census and that response is mandatory, and which version, if any, of the envelope flaps was preferred by participants.

Figure 2. Envelope Flap Language

Version 1: “The American Community Survey is an official survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. You are required to respond to both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census. Thank you for your participation.”

Version 2: “2020 is a census year. Some addresses, including yours, will receive both the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey this year. Please respond to both. Thank you for your participation.”

5.4.1 Findings

5.4.1.1 General Comments

Despite the fact that almost all of the participants opened the envelope for this mailing with the envelope flap side up, only one participant seemed to read the language on the flap when initially interacting with the mailing. This is similar to what we observed in participants' interactions with the census mailings, which have a placeholder URL (xxxx-xxxx.census.gov) printed on the back of the envelopes. Later in the interview, we explicitly asked participants whether they had noticed this language. Only a few additional participants said they had noticed it, with one of these participants explicitly stating she did not read it and another participant stating she had noticed the logo but not the text next to it.

5.4.1.2 Version 1

During probing, we asked participants who had not read the language on the envelope flap to do so, and asked them to put this language in their own words. A few participants commented that this was telling them they were required to complete the ACS, but most participants generally paraphrased this as saying they are required to complete both the ACS and 2020 Census:

"The ACS is sponsored by the Census Bureau and you are required to do the survey and the 2020 Census questionnaire."

"Okay, so this one is just saying basically that the American Community Survey is conducted by the Census Bureau, and please respond to both."

One participant first read this as stating that she only had to complete either the ACS or the census, but then realized her mistake.

A couple of participants also commented that this envelope flap uses the language "required to respond" as opposed to required "by law" to respond, which is used in other parts of the mailing such as the front of the envelope. These participants suggested the "required to respond" phrase did not make it clear why response was required, but participants did not express a preference for either of these phrases.

5.4.1.3 Version 2

Similarly to Version 1, most participants generally understood this language was communicating that they are required to complete both the ACS and the census:

"That I have got to do two surveys."

"You're going to get a census and a community survey. Please do both."

A couple of participants also commented on the messaging about how only some addresses will receive the ACS. One of these participants commented that she assumed it would be a "small percent" of people who would be asked to complete both.

"Now it's telling you that some addresses will receive both surveys but not everybody."

"It was saying basically some addresses will receive the survey and some won't. They're not picking you personally, but it'll probably done like a lottery type system to select random people to complete the survey."

5.4.1.4 Comparing Version 1 and Version 2

Many participants immediately compared versions 1 and 2 to each other upon being shown the alternate version of the envelope. Similar numbers of participants thought either Version 1 or Version 2 was easier to understand. One participant commented that Version 1 was "more straightforward," while another participant said of Version 2:

"I think it's more... I don't know if I want to say clearer, but it gives you more information."

During probing, we also asked participants to read the language on the alternate version of the envelope and asked participants which version of the envelope flap, if any, better explains that the ACS and census are different. A few participants preferred the first version or said that they both were about the same, with one participant saying neither envelope flap explained this difference:

"None of them explain that. I wouldn't know they were different anyway. I would think they'd almost be the same."

Many participants said the second version better explained this difference. One participant commented that Version 1 made it sound to her like everyone had to complete both the ACS and the census.

"[Version 2] makes a distinction, because it says that some will receive both."

"I guess [Version 2]...because [Version 1] doesn't really... it's just saying that both of them are required, that's all. It's not telling you much about it."

Participants were also asked which version of the envelope better explains that response to both ACS and census is required. Unsurprisingly, most participants said Version 1 better explained this because Version 2 does not explicitly state that response is required.

Overall, when asked which version of the envelope flap they preferred, slightly more participants preferred Version 2, with some participants commenting this was because they felt it was more polite:

"[Version 1] is telling you that you need to... the other is more so...asking you. It's not really demanding...It's not giving you an ultimatum."

“[Version 1] is straight to the point. [Version 2] is more inviting.”

“[Version 2] is asking you, not telling you.”

5.4.2 Recommendations

Both versions were generally well understood by participants. However, because only one participant noticed the language on the envelope flap when reviewing this mailing in cognitive testing, it is unclear that adding this would be worth the added printing expense. We recommended removing the language from the back of the envelope.

If this language were to be retained, the choice of which version to use would depend on how important it was to communicate that response to both is required in this part of the mailing. If this is important, we would recommend using Version 1 or modifying Version 2 to read:

“2020 is a census year. Some addresses, including yours, will receive both the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey this year. You are required to respond. Thank you for your participation.”

If this is not important, we would recommend using Version 2, since participants thought this version better explained the difference between the ACS and the census and thought it was more polite.

5.5 Field Flier

After participants reviewed all of the mailings, we asked them to look at the field flier (see Figure 3). Similarly to the mail materials section of the interview, we observed how participants interacted with the flier and asked them to think aloud as they reviewed the flier. We asked several follow-up probing questions, such as whether there were any questions they thought people might have that were not answered by the flier. We also asked participants about a specific line on the flier that references Congress to determine whether this was viewed negatively by participants.

Figure 3. ACS Field Flier

The American Community Survey and the 2020 Census

I already answered the 2020 Census. Is this the same thing?

The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.

How is the American Community Survey different from the 2020 Census?

The American Community Survey (ACS) shows how we live—our education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year. For example, results may be used to decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed.

The census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

Do I have to answer both?

Yes, you are required by law to answer both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census (Title 13, U.S. Code).

Your responses will help your community get its fair share of federal funding. The data help determine how more than \$675 billion is distributed to states and communities every year.

Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?

No, your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The American Community Survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, health insurance, and transportation.

Why was I chosen for the American Community Survey?

The U.S. Census Bureau chose this address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample.

Thank you for your participation in both the ACS and the 2020 Census!



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Connect with us @uscensusbureau

The American Community Survey

Each year, a random sample of addresses completes the American Community Survey.

Respond online at
respond.census.gov/acs

or

Respond by mail
using the paper form

The American Community Survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, health insurance, and transportation.



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
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5.5.1 Findings

5.5.1.1 General Comments

All participants reviewed both sides of the flier unprompted, with about half of the participants looking at the FAQ side of the flier first and the other half looking at the questionnaire image side first. Participants generally thought the flier was easy to understand and straightforward. Several participants spontaneously commented they liked the design of the flier and that it was visually appealing, although a couple of participants also said that it seemed “busy” or that the font was too small.

At this point in the interview, participants had reviewed 10 pieces of mail and the field flier in short succession. Participants commented that this flier echoed the themes of the mailings they had previously reviewed and viewed it as “another reminder” that the ACS is different from the census and that response to both is required.

“It’s the same information, different font with some different colors.”

“I like this here, that [it says the] survey asks questions not on the census.”

“Here’s a piece of paper [to tell me]...if you didn’t know, here is a quick overview of what the Census Bureau is doing, what we need this information for, you need to fill out both of them, and so on.”

However, one participant erroneously commented that this flier does not have any information about response being required by law.

Many participants seemed to pick up on the fact that this flier primarily discusses the ACS, but some participants indicated they were confused about whether this flier was “for ACS” or “for census.” This confusion sometimes stemmed from the content of the flier and sometimes stemmed from the Census Bureau logo in the footer at the bottom of the flier.¹⁰ One participant thought the flier should only talk about the ACS:

“You don’t have to tell me the census is conducted once every 10 years. That refers to the census, we’re talking now about the community survey. So information should be strictly on the survey.”

One participant even thought that ACS and the census were the same thing after viewing this flier:

“Well when you say ‘the American Community Survey’ first, that’s fine until I look down at the bottom and see the ‘United States Census.’ Then I know they’re the same again.”

¹⁰ The appearance of the footer is mandated by the Census Bureau style guidelines (U.S. Census Bureau 2019).

Another particularly perceptive participant had noticed the census mailings had a lot of blue and the ACS mailings had a lot of green and was therefore confused by the fact that both colors are used on the flier. A third participant thought that the questionnaire image side was for the ACS and the FAQ side was for the census due to their differing titles (“The American Community Survey” and “The American Community Survey and the 2020 Census,” respectively) and an additional participant said the title on the FAQ side was confusing.

Some participants commented that they started to feel like the Census Bureau was “hounding” them for a response. Similarly, not all participants fully understood the context in which people would see the flier; some asked questions such as whether this was something that would be hung on their front door.

“Nowhere in this thing does it say an interviewer stopped at the house. Or, ‘because you failed to answer our numerous mailings and everything else, we need to conduct an in home interview because it is required by law.’ Nowhere does it tell me what this flier is.”

“I think that...if I see this on my door, that you guys really are gonna not give up on me until I respond back to you.”

Two other pieces of information that were particularly salient to participants on this flier included the multiple response modes shown on the questionnaire image side and that addresses are randomly selected for participation in the ACS. Participants generally liked that this information was provided.

“Okay, so there’s one on the internet and there’s one on paper. Some people would probably prefer to do the one on paper, depending on if you have a computer. Some people would prefer the computer [too].”

“I like adding again that it was randomly selected; that it’s not just everybody, and that it’s just the address, not the person. That might make people less nervous about filling it out.”

“Oh, but it’s random.”

One participant seemed not to have realized that the paper form was included in one of the mailings he previously reviewed and was unsure how people could respond by paper.

“How do I get the paper form? Have I previously received it? And if I have, it should say, ‘You have previously received it, and if you don’t have it anymore...’ How do you get another one?”

5.5.1.2 Additional FAQs

We also asked participants whether they could think of any questions people might have that were not answered by this flier. About half of the participants said they could not think of anything else. Suggestions for additional FAQs made by at least a few participants each were to provide a due date and discuss how the data from both the ACS and census would be used.

Similarly, several participants made comments about privacy and confidentiality, saying they were not sure if their responses would be anonymous or how their information would be kept private.

Other suggestions made once each were to provide contact information for the Census Bureau or the FR such as a phone number, give information about responding in other languages, show specific question wording from the questionnaire, and describe what happens next if this flier were left at your door when you were not home.

“I would want to see what it says, what kinds of questions they ask and how long it’s going to take.”

5.5.1.3 Line about Congress

On the FAQ side of the flier there is a line that reads, “The census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.” There was some concern that participants might view this negatively if they interpreted it as seeming political or partisan.

Participants’ reactions to this line were generally positive or neutral. Some people said they already knew that the population count went to Congress and others said it was interesting to learn. Only a couple of participants said that this line might “turn people off.” However, participants’ comments about this line illuminated another issue. Some participants thought this line was stating that both the ACS and census are conducted every 10 years, while other participants commented that it was strange for this flier to specify how often the census is conducted but not mention how frequently the ACS is conducted.

“The assumption is that this community survey, while it’s different from the census, it occurs every 10 years too.”

“It’s pretty much telling them that the census conducts these surveys every ten years, which is kind of a long time.”

5.5.2 Recommendations

While this flier was received well by participants overall, we recommended a few small changes to increase its clarity. First, we suggested removing “and the 2020 Census” from the title on the FAQ side, as its inclusion seemed to confuse participants about the purpose of the flier. This would make the title consistent across the two sides of the flier. Second, we recommended making a change to address the issue raised by the inclusion of the sentence about the timing of the census. This could either be accomplished by removing the reference to the census being conducted “every 10 years” or by adding information to the flier about how frequently the ACS is conducted. The 2010 version of this flier included a sentence about the ACS being conducted “every year,” but this was removed prior to cognitive testing because it did not capture the true frequency of ACS data collection, which occurs continuously.

6 CONCLUSION

Overall, results from cognitive testing showed that the revised ACS mailing materials and the field flier were generally successful at communicating the difference between the ACS and the census and that response to both is mandatory. Participants noticed this language across the ACS mailings and in multiple places across these mailings. However, almost no participants noticed modifications that were made to the back of the envelopes in the initial mailing and questionnaire package mailing, and only some participants noticed the FAQs on the back of the letters in these mailings. We recommended removing the language from the back of the envelopes and making some small changes to the materials to help reinforce the distinction between the ACS and the census.

The mailing material modifications tested in these cognitive interviews were made using the 2018 ACS production materials as a starting point. Several other changes were made to the production ACS mailing materials for 2019 and 2020 independent of this cognitive testing. For example, the FAQ brochure was removed from the initial mailing, the size of the questionnaire and corresponding envelope were changed in the questionnaire package mailing, and language in the letters was modified slightly. As a result, cognitive interview recommendations were considered in the context of these changes.

The Census Bureau planned to field final modified materials between March and September 2020. A small number of addresses were also scheduled to receive mailing materials that did not mention the 2020 Census or attempt to distinguish the ACS from the census. These addresses were included as a control panel so that the effectiveness of these changes could be evaluated in preparation for the next census in 2030. This mailing strategy and experiment could not be implemented as planned for the April-September 2020 ACS panels due to mailing constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, sampled addresses in these months received a different mailing strategy, comprised of fewer and different types of mailings. More information about the 2020 ACS mailing strategy can be found in Spiers and Heimel (2021). Given that these modified ACS materials could not be used as planned after March 2020, we recommend conducting additional testing prior to 2030 to inform decisions about their use.

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8 APPENDIX

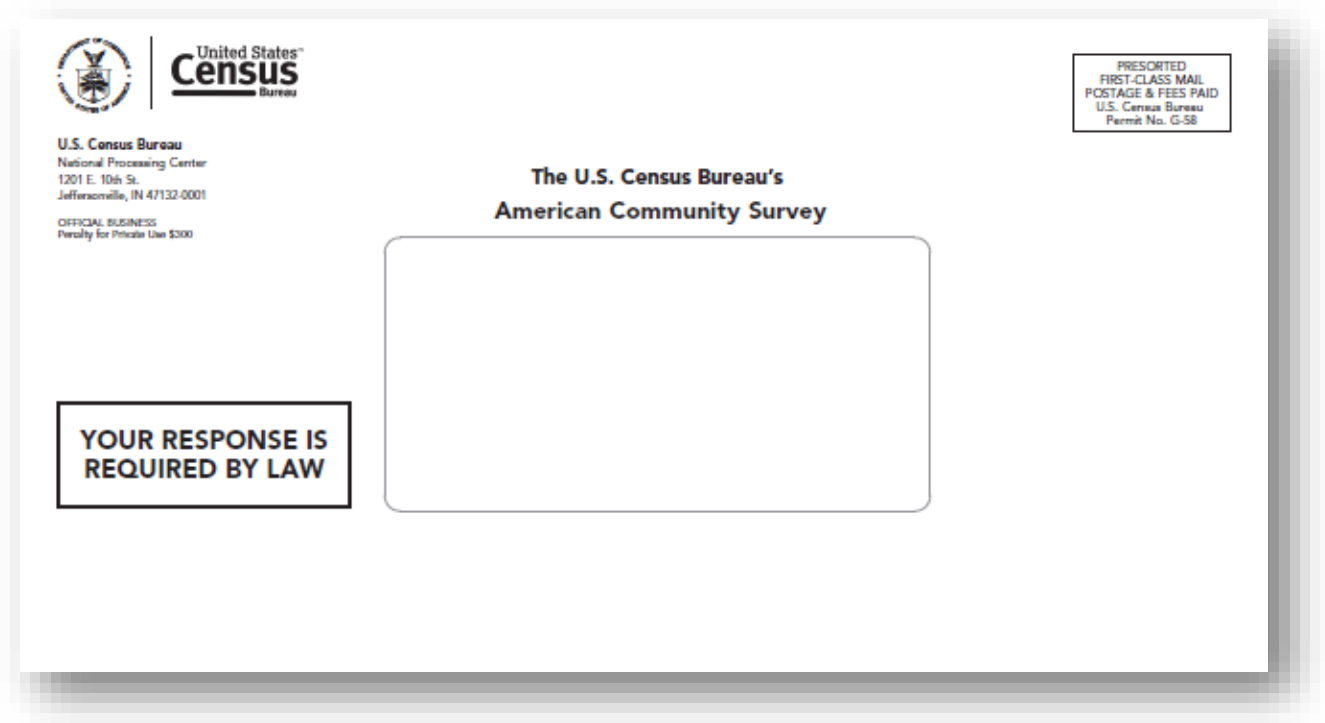
8.1 2020 ACS Mailing Materials for Cognitive Testing

8.1.1 First Planned Mailing to ACS Households in 2020

This mail package contained the following items:

- ACS Initial Mailing Outgoing Envelopes
- Intro Letter
- Instruction Card
- Multilingual Brochure
- FAQ Brochure

8.1.1.1 Front of Envelope for Testing, Mailing 1:



8.1.1.2 Back of Envelope for Testing, Mailing 1:

United States
Census
Bureau

ACS-4600X(2020) (3-2018)

8.1.1.3 Front of Letter for Testing, Mailing 1:



United States[®]
Census
Bureau

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233-0001

Office of the Director

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau ...

Your household has been randomly selected to complete a very important national survey, the American Community Survey. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts this survey to give our country an up-to-date picture of how we live—our education, employment, housing, and more.

The American Community Survey is a separate part of the 2020 Census program. Some households, including yours, will receive both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census this year. Your response to **both** is required by law.

Using the enclosed instructions, please complete the survey online as soon as possible at:

<https://respond.census.gov/acs>

The Census Bureau is using the Internet to collect this information in an effort to conserve natural resources, save taxpayers' money, and process your data more efficiently. If you are unable to complete the survey online, there is no need to contact us. We will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks.

The American Community Survey collects critical information used to meet the needs of communities across the United States. For example, results from this survey are used to decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed. This information also helps communities plan for the kinds of emergency situations that might affect you and your neighbors, such as floods and other natural disasters.

The Census Bureau chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample. The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data. The enclosed brochure answers frequently asked questions about the survey.

If you need help completing the survey, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you in advance for your help and for responding to both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census.

Enclosures

ACS-13(LX)(2020) (9-2018)

[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

8.1.1.4 Back of Letter for Testing, Mailing 1:

I already answered the 2020 Census. Is this the same thing?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year. The Census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

Do I have to answer both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census?

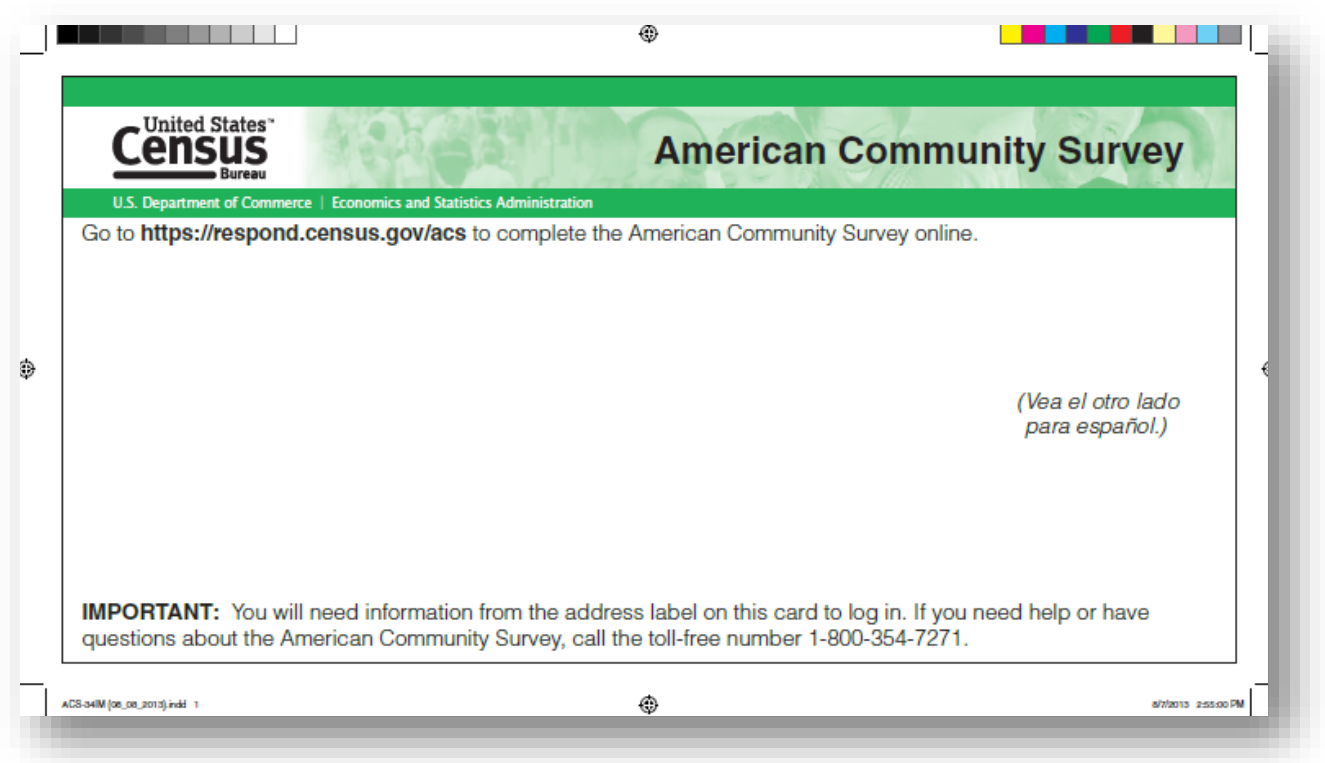
Yes, your response to both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code). Your responses will help your community get its fair share of federal funding. The data help determine how more than \$675 billion is distributed to states and communities each year.

Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?

No, your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions that are not asked by the 2020 Census, such as: education, employment, health insurance, internet access, and transportation.



8.1.1.5 Instruction Card, side 1



8.1.1.6 Instruction Card, side 2

United States[™]
Census
Bureau

American Community Survey

U.S. Department of Commerce | Economics and Statistics Administration

Vaya a <https://respond.census.gov/acs> para completar la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense por Internet en español.

ATENCIÓN: Necesitará información que aparece en la etiqueta en el otro lado de esta tarjeta para iniciar la sesión. Si usted necesita ayuda para llenar la encuesta o tiene preguntas acerca de la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense, llame sin cargo al 1-877-833-5625.

See other side for English.

ACS-34 IM (08/08/2013)

ACS-34IM (08_08_2013).indd 2

8/7/2013 2:55:00 PM

8.1.1.7 Multilingual brochure, side 1

The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting the American Community Survey

In a few days you will receive an American Community Survey questionnaire in the mail. Because you are living in the United States, you are required by law to respond to this survey. If you have questions about the form, please call us toll-free at 1-800-354-7271.

What is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey is an important survey conducted by the Census Bureau. It is designed to give communities current information about its people and housing. In order to make well-informed decisions, a community needs accurate and reliable information. By responding to this survey, you are helping your community to get this kind of information.

Will my answers to this survey be kept confidential?

Yes. The U.S. Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

La Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos está realizando la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense

En unos días, recibirá por correo un cuestionario de la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense. Como usted está viviendo en los Estados Unidos, la ley exige que usted responda a esta encuesta. Si tiene preguntas sobre el cuestionario, llámenos al 1-877-833-5625 para hablar con uno de nuestros empleados que habla español. La llamada es gratis. El empleado podrá contestar sus preguntas o usted podrá completar la encuesta por teléfono.

¿Qué es la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense?

La Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense es una encuesta importante realizada por la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos. Está diseñada para brindar información actual a las comunidades sobre las personas y las viviendas. Para poder tomar buenas decisiones, una comunidad necesita información precisa y confiable. Al responder a esta encuesta, usted está ayudando a su comunidad a obtener este tipo de información.

¿Serán confidenciales mis respuestas a esta encuesta?

Sí. La Oficina del Censo de los EE.UU. está obligada por ley a mantener confidencial su información. A la Oficina del Censo no se le permite divulgar sus respuestas de manera que este hogar pudiera ser identificado. En conformidad con la Ley para el Fortalecimiento de la Seguridad Cibernética Federal del 2015, sus datos están protegidos contra los riesgos de seguridad cibernética mediante los controles aplicados a los sistemas que transmiten su información.

Important Information From the U.S. Census Bureau

Información Importante de la Oficina del Censo de los Estados Unidos

美国人口普查局重要通知

Thông tin quan trọng từ Văn phòng Thống kê Dân số Hoa Kỳ

Важная информация от Бюро переписи населения США

미국 인구조사국에서 전해드리는 중요한 정보



Issued September 2017
ACS #12111



United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economic and Statistics Administration
1600 Census Drive
Census.gov

8.1.1.8 Multilingual brochure, side 2

美国人口普查局正在进行美国社区问卷调查

您将在几天内收到一份邮寄的美国社区问卷调查。由于您目前居住在美国，因此根据法律规定，您必须答复此问卷调查。这个调查问卷只有英文版。请拨打我们的免费电话：1-800-638-5945，我们将会有会说中文的工作人员回答您的问题，或者您能够在电话上用中文回答调查的问题。

什么是美国社区问卷调查？

美国社区问卷调查由美国人口普查局主持，是一项重要的调查。目的是为了向各个社区提供有关居民和住房方面的最新信息。一个社区要做出明智的决策，需要真实准确的信息。您答复此问卷调查，就是在帮您所在社区获取这样的信息。

我对这次调查的回答，人口普查局是否会保密？

是的。根据法律规定，美国人口普查局将对您的信息保密。人口普查局不得以可识别您的身份的方式公开发布您的回答。依据2015年联邦增强网络安全法案，通过追踪传输您资料的系统，来确保您个人资料受到保护，避免网络安全风险。

Văn phòng Thống kê Dân số Hoa Kỳ đang thực hiện cuộc Khảo sát Cộng đồng tại Mỹ.

Trong một vài ngày nữa quý vị sẽ nhận được bản câu hỏi Khảo sát Cộng đồng tại Mỹ qua thư tín. Vì quý vị đang sống ở Hoa Kỳ, nên luật bắt buộc quý vị phải trả lời cuộc khảo sát này. Nếu quý vị có thắc mắc về mẫu đơn, xin gọi chúng tôi theo số điện thoại miễn phí 1-877-221-9436. Bản câu hỏi khảo sát chỉ có bằng tiếng Anh.

Cuộc Khảo sát Cộng đồng tại Mỹ là gì?

Cuộc Khảo sát Cộng đồng tại Mỹ là một cuộc khảo sát quan trọng được Văn phòng Thống kê Dân số Hoa Kỳ thực hiện. Nó được thiết kế để cung cấp cho cộng đồng thông tin hiện tại về người dân và nhà cửa. Nhằm có được những quyết định thực thời có ích lợi trực tiếp cho những nhu cầu của cộng đồng quý vị, những thông tin cần được chính xác và đáng tin cậy. Bằng cách trả lời cuộc khảo sát này, quý vị đang giúp cộng đồng mình lấy được loại thông tin này.

Lưu các câu trả lời khảo sát của tôi có được giữ bí mật không?

Có. Cục Thống kê Dân số Hoa Kỳ được pháp luật yêu cầu bảo mật thông tin của quý vị. Cục Thống kê không được phép công bố công khai các phản hồi của quý vị theo cách có thể nhận được của Liên Bang 2015, số liệu của qui vị sẽ được bảo vệ để tránh khỏi các nguy cơ về an ninh mạng qua cách kiểm duyệt các hệ thống chuyển số liệu của qui vị.

Бюро переписи населения проводит Анкетирование населения США по месту жительства

Через несколько дней Вы получите по почте анкету Анкетирование населения США по месту жительства. Так как Вы проживаете в США, Вы обязаны в соответствии с законом дать ответы на вопросы данного исследования. Анкета составлена только на английском языке. Позвоните по бесплатному номеру 1-866-225-2297, и Вам ответит русскоговорящий сотрудник. Вы сможете получить ответы на Ваши вопросы и Вам помогут заполнить анкету по телефону.

Что представляет собой Анкетирование населения США по месту жительства?

Анкетирование населения США по месту жительства – это важнейшее исследование, проводимое Бюро переписи населения США. Его цель – обеспечить общество актуальной информацией о населении и жилищных условиях. Для принятия обоснованных решений на местах необходимо иметь точную и достоверную информацию. Отвечая на вопросы данного исследования, Вы помогаете своему району получить такую информацию.

Будет ли сохранена конфиденциальность моих ответов?

Да. По закону Бюро переписи населения США обязано соблюдать конфиденциальность ваших данных. Ему запрещено публично разглашать Ваши ответы таким образом, чтобы по ним можно было установить Вашу личность. Защиту Ваших данных от кибер-рисков обеспечивают федеральный закон «О повышении кибербезопасности» от 2015 года, в соответствии с которым регулярно проводятся проверки систем передачи данных.

미국 인구조사국에서는 미국 지역사회조사서를 실시하고 있습니다.

여칠 안으로 미국 지역사회조사서 설문지를 우편으로 받으실 것입니다. 미국에 사시는 모든 분은 법에 의해 이 설문에 응답하셔야 합니다. 설문지는 영어로만 되어 있습니다. 한국어로 설문을 작성하고 싶으시거나 질문이 있으시면, 무료전화 1-800-772-6728로 전화를 주십시오. 한국어 담당직원과

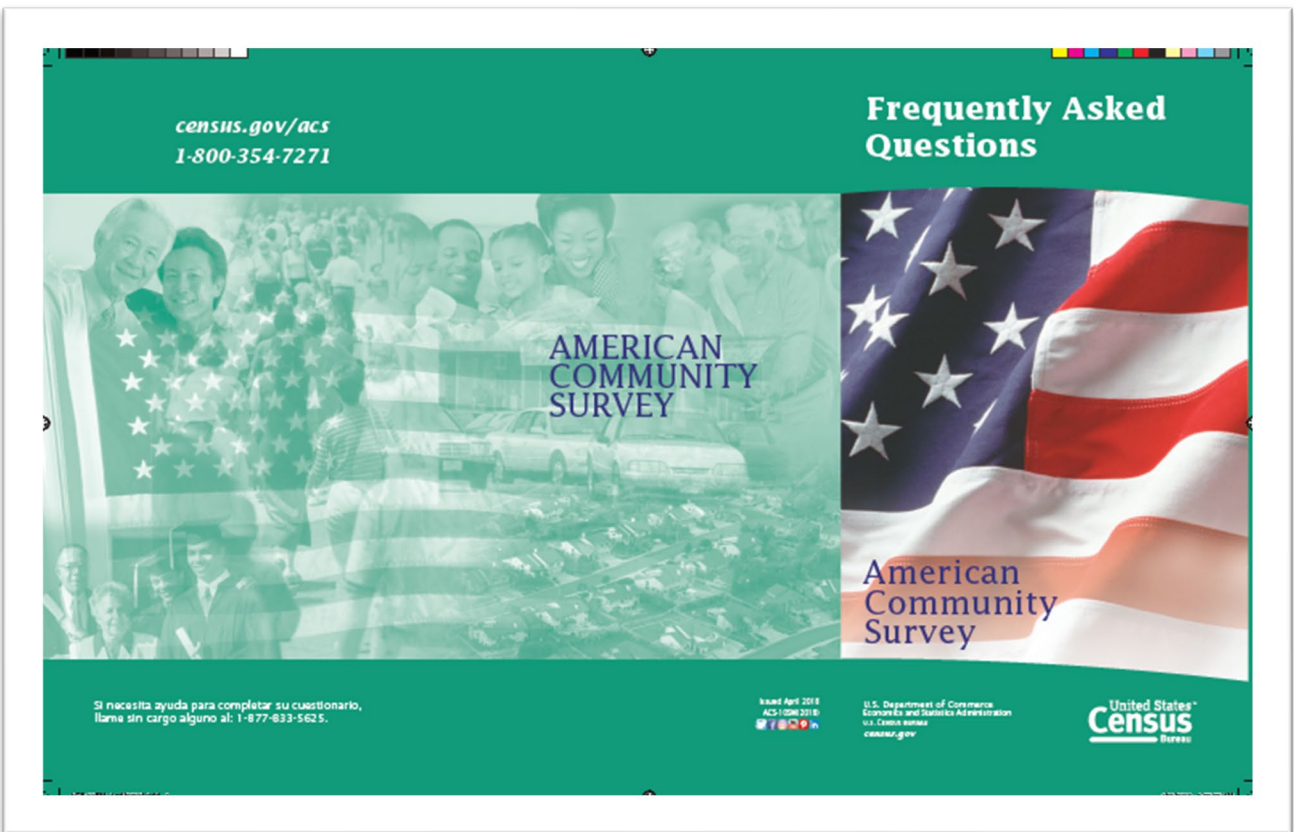
미국 지역사회조사란 무엇인가요?

미국 지역사회조사는 미국 인구조사국에서 시행하는 중요한 설문조사입니다. 이 설문조사는 지역사회 주민들과 주택에 관한 최근 정보를 알려드리고자 계획되었습니다. 지역사회가 정보에 기초한 합리적인 결정들 내리기 위해서 정확하고 믿을 수 있는 정보가 필요합니다. 귀하의 설문응답은 지역사회가 이런 정보를 수집하는 데 도움을 줍니다.

설문조사에 대한 답변은 보호될까요?

네. 미국 인구조사국은 법에 따라 귀하의 정보를 비밀로 유지해야 할 의무가 있습니다. 미국 인구조사국은 귀하가 응답한 정보를 귀하의 신상을 알 수 있는 형태로 일반에 공개할 수 없으며, 2015년 연방 사이버보안강화법에 따라, 귀하의 데이터는 데이터 전송 시스템의 철저한 검사를 통해 사이버 보안의 위험으로부터 보호됩니다.

8.1.1.9 FAQ Brochure, side 1



8.1.1.10 FAQ Brochure, side 2



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey collects information about population and housing characteristics for the nation, states, cities, counties, metropolitan areas, and communities on a continuous basis. Based on the American Community Survey, the U.S. Census Bureau can provide up-to-date data about our rapidly changing country more often than once every 10 years when the census is conducted.

How do I benefit by answering the American Community Survey?

Communities need data about the well-being of children, families, and the older population to provide services to them. By responding to the American Community Survey questionnaire, you are helping your community to establish goals, identify problems and solutions, and measure the performance of programs.

The data also are used to decide where to locate new highways, schools, hospitals, and community centers; to show a large corporation that a town has the workforce the company needs; and in many other ways.

Do I have to answer the questions on the American Community Survey?

Yes. Your response to this survey is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141, 193, and 221). Title 13, as changed by Title 18, imposes a penalty for not responding. We estimate this survey will take about 40 minutes to complete.

How will the Census Bureau use the information that I provide?

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses to produce statistics. Your information will be used in combination with information from other households to produce data for your community. Similar data will be produced for communities across Puerto Rico and the United States.

We may combine your answers with information that you gave to other agencies to enhance the statistical uses of these data. This information will be given the same protections as your survey information. Based on the information that you provide, you may be asked to participate in other Census Bureau surveys that are voluntary.

Will the Census Bureau keep my information confidential?

Yes. The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data.

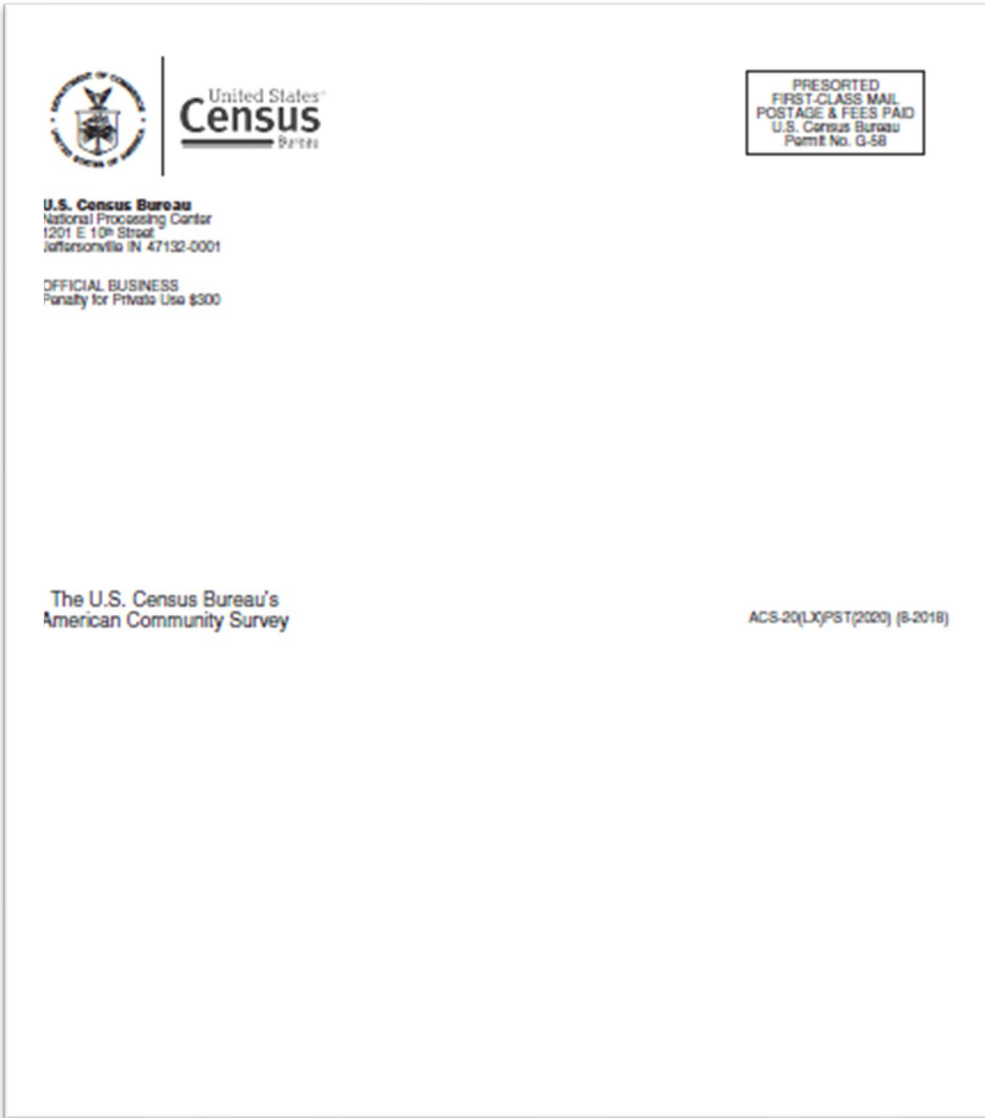
Where can I find more information about the American Community Survey or get assistance?

You may visit our Web site at census.gov/acs or call 1-800-354-7271, if you need assistance or more information.


8.1.2 Second Planned Mailing to ACS Households in 2020

This mailing is a pressure-seal mailer.

8.1.2.1 Outside of Pressure Seal Mailer for Testing, Mailing 2:



8.1.2.2 Inside of Pressure Seal Mailer for Testing, Mailing 2:



United States[™]
Census
Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
Office of the Director

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau ...

A few days ago, you should have received instructions for completing the **American Community Survey** online. Some households, including yours, will receive both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census this year. **Your response to both is required by law.** If you have not already responded to the American Community Survey, please do so now.

Respond now at **<https://respond.census.gov/acs>**
Log in using this user ID:

If we do not receive your response online, we will mail a paper questionnaire to your address.

Your response is critically important to your local community and your country. Local communities depend on information from the American Community Survey to decide where schools, highways, hospitals and other important services are needed.

Responding promptly will prevent you from receiving additional reminder mailings, phone calls, or personal visits from Census Bureau interviewers.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Security Security Security Security Security

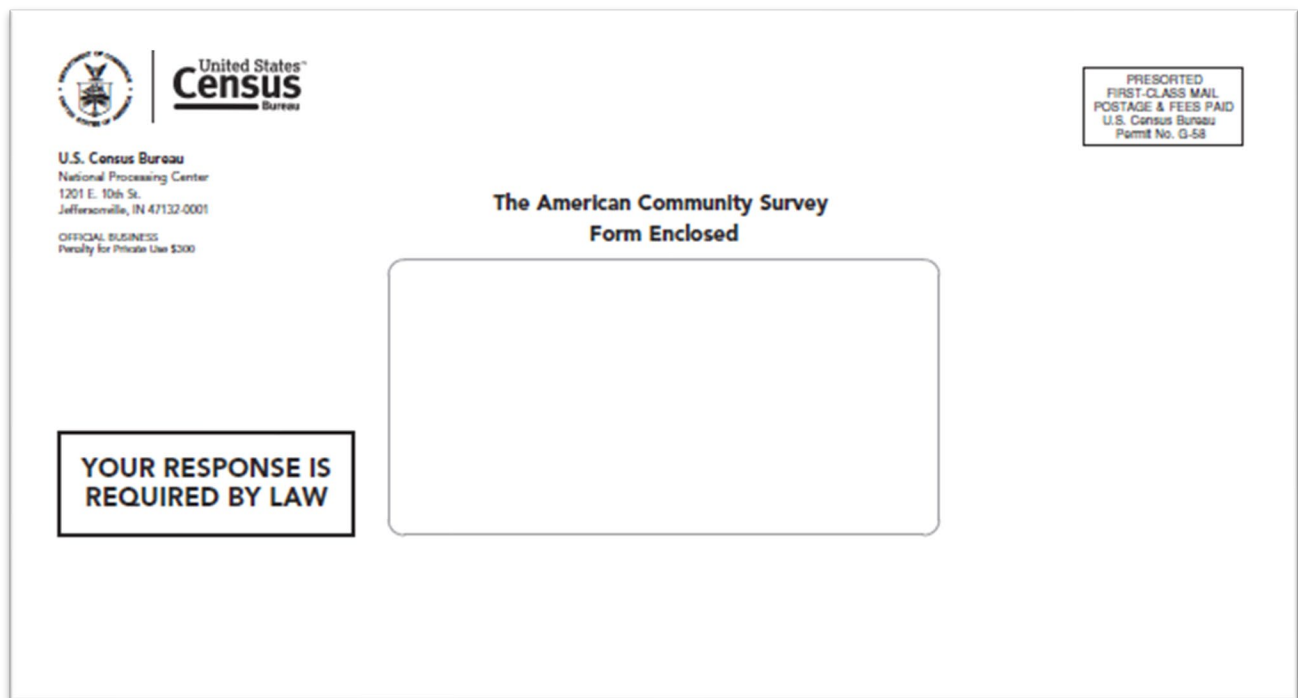
If you need help completing the survey or have questions, please call 1-800-354-7271.

8.1.3 Third Planned Mailing to ACS Households in 2020

This mail package contained the following items:


- ACS Outgoing Envelope – two versions
- Letter
- Instruction Card
- FAQ brochure
- Questionnaire (not shown)
- Incoming/Return envelope

8.1.3.1 Front of Envelope for Testing, Mailing 3 v1:





8.1.3.2 Back of Envelope for Testing, Mailing 3 v1:

ACS-4600/2020 (8-2018)

 The American Community Survey is an official survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.
You are required to respond to both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census.
Thank you for your participation.

8.1.3.3 Front of Envelope for Testing, Mailing 3, v2:

	United States[™] Census <small>Bureau</small>	<div>PRESORTED FIRST-CLASS MAIL POSTAGE & FEES PAID U.S. Census Bureau Permit No. G-58</div>
U.S. Census Bureau National Processing Center 1201 E. 10th St. Jeffersonville, IN 47132-0001		The American Community Survey Form Enclosed
<small>OFFICIAL BUSINESS Penalty for Private Use \$300</small>		
<div>YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW</div>		

8.1.3.4 Back of Envelope for Testing, Mailing 3, v2:

ACS-46X(N)2020 (8-2018)

**United States™
Census
Bureau**

2020 is a census year. Some addresses, including yours, will receive both the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey this year. Please respond to both.

Thank you for your participation.

8.1.3.5 Front of Letter for Testing, Mailing 3:



United States[®]
Census
Bureau

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233-0001
Office of the Director

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau ...

About two weeks ago, the U.S. Census Bureau sent instructions for completing the American Community Survey to your address. We asked you to help us with this very important survey by completing it online. But we have not received your response yet.

If you have already completed the survey, thank you very much. If you have not, please complete the survey soon using ONE of the following two options.

Option 1: Go to <https://respond.census.gov/acs> to complete the survey online.

Option 2: Fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire.

This year, you are also required to answer the 2020 Census. **Answering both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census is important and is required by U.S. law.**

The American Community Survey is so important that a Census Bureau representative may attempt to contact you by telephone or personal visit if we do not receive your response.

The information collected in this survey will help decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed. This information also is used to develop programs to reduce traffic congestion, provide job training, and plan for the health care needs of the elderly.

The Census Bureau chose your address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample. The Census Bureau is required by law to keep your information confidential. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data. The enclosed brochure answers frequently asked questions about the survey.

If you need help completing the survey, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you.

Enclosures

ACS-14(LX)(2020) (8-15-2018)

census.gov

8.1.3.6 Back of Letter for Testing, Mailing 3:

I already answered the 2020 Census. Is this the same thing?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is different from the 2020 Census.

The ACS shows how we live – our education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs to your community every year.

The Census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

Do I have to answer both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census?

Yes, your response to both is required by law (Title 13, U.S. Code).

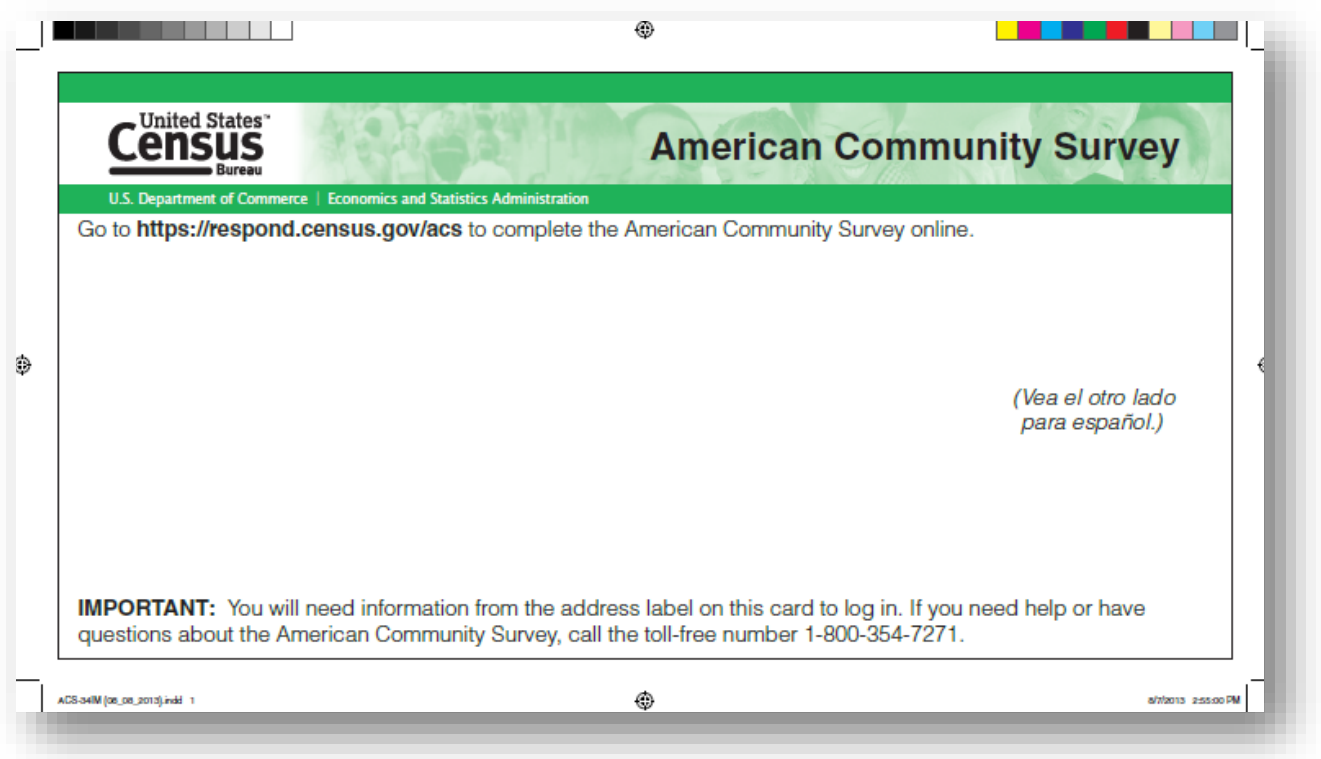
Your responses will help your community get its fair share of federal funding. The data help determine how more than \$675 billion is distributed to states and communities each year.

Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?

No, your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS includes questions that are not asked by the 2020 Census, such as: education, employment, health insurance, internet access, and transportation.

United States[®]
Census
Bureau

8.1.3.7 Instruction Card, side 1



8.1.3.8 Instruction Card, side 2

United States[™]
Census
Bureau

American Community Survey

U.S. Department of Commerce | Economics and Statistics Administration

Vaya a <https://respond.census.gov/acs> para completar la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense por Internet en español.

ATENCIÓN: Necesitará información que aparece en la etiqueta en el otro lado de esta tarjeta para iniciar la sesión. Si usted necesita ayuda para llenar la encuesta o tiene preguntas acerca de la Encuesta sobre la Comunidad Estadounidense, llame sin cargo al 1-877-833-5625.

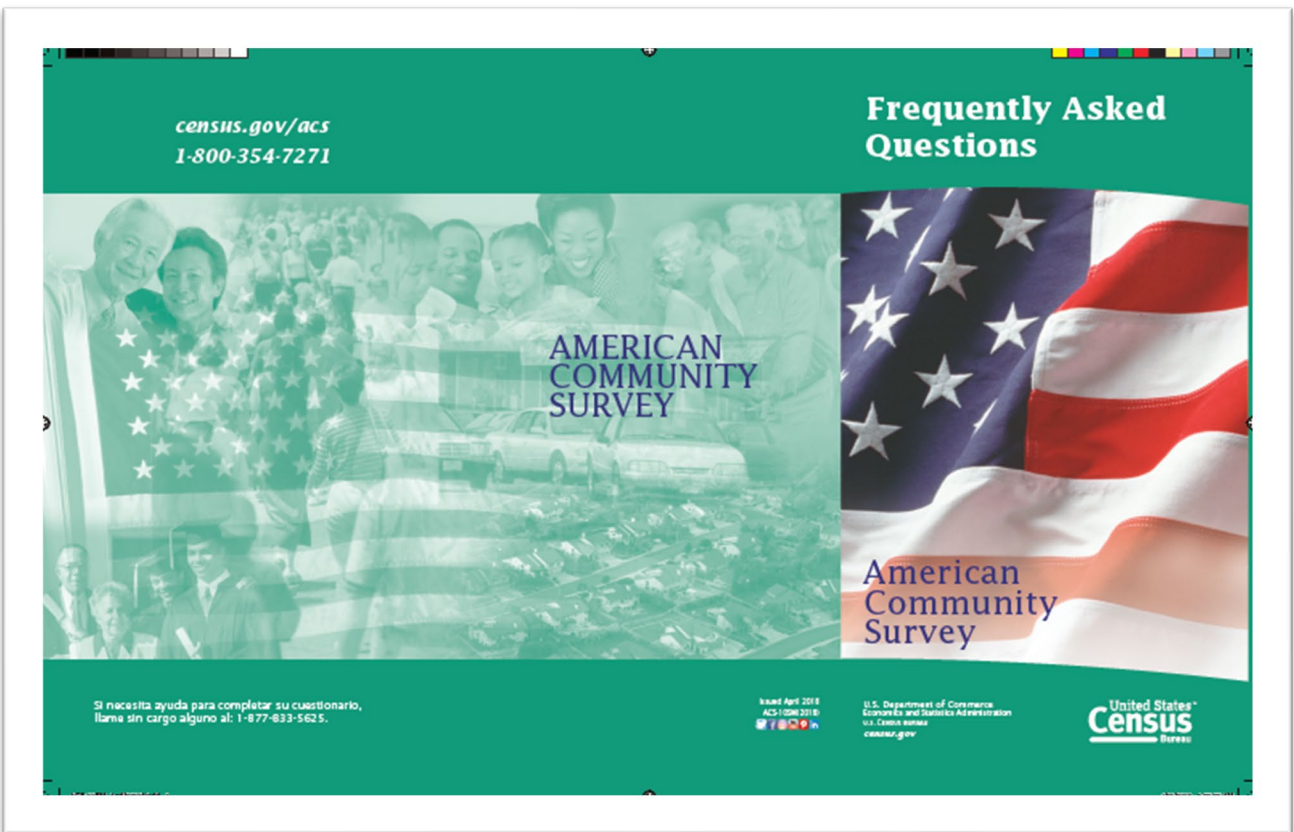
See other side for English.

ACS-34 IM (08/08/2013)

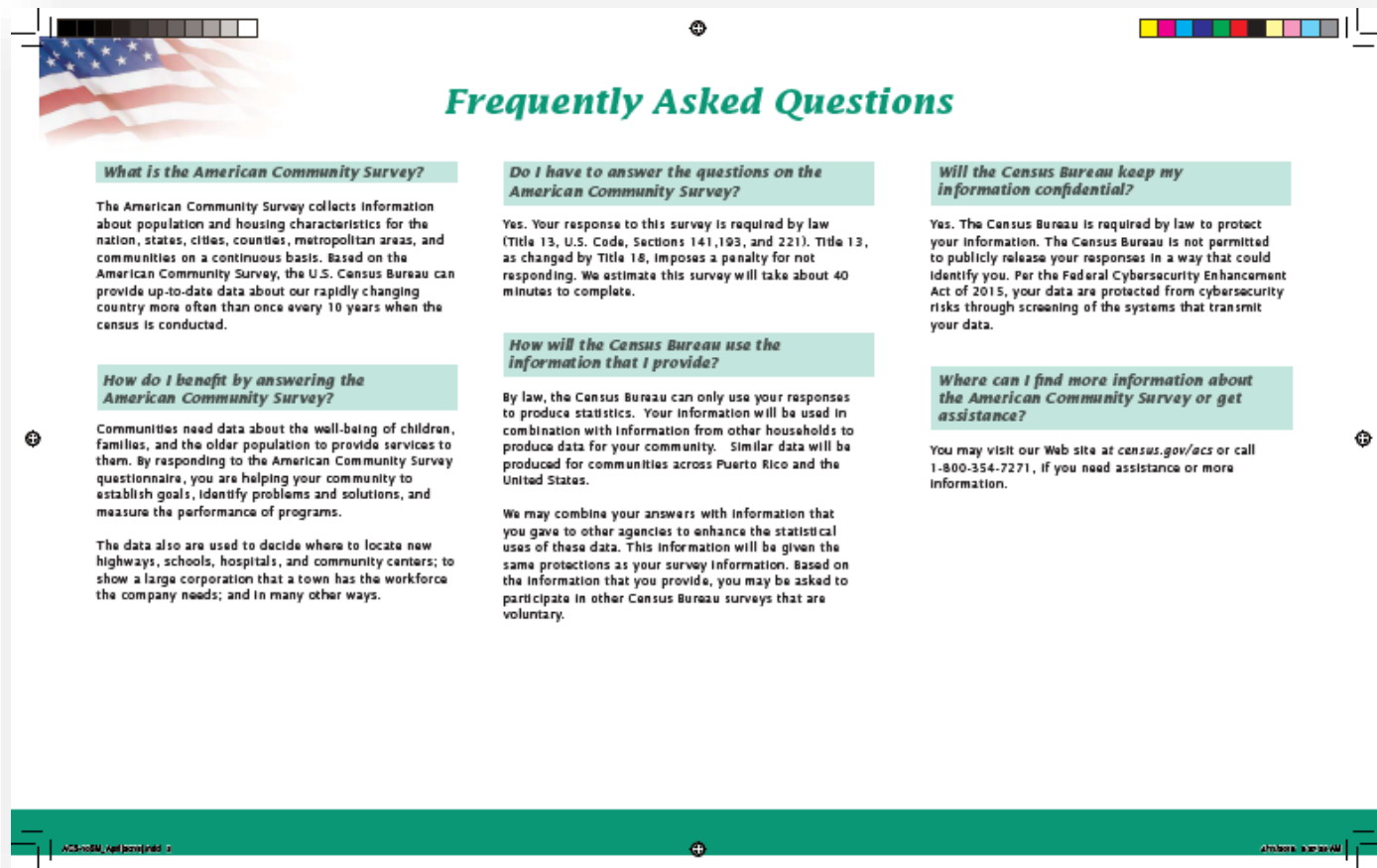
ACS-34IM (08_08_2013).indd 2

8/7/2013 2:55:00 PM

8.1.3.9 FAQ Brochure, side 1



8.1.3.10 FAQ Brochure, side 2



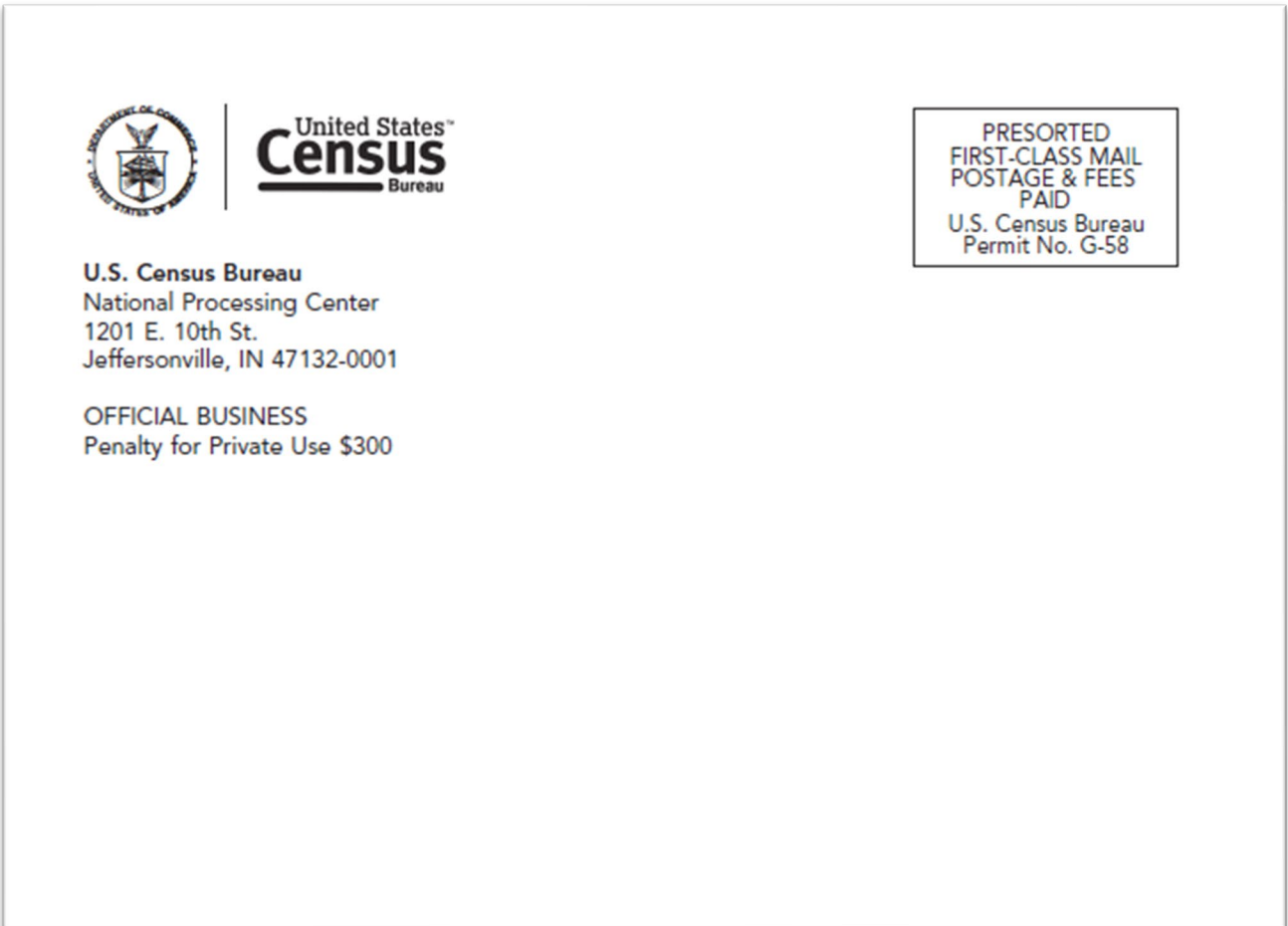
8.1.3.11 Return Envelope



8.1.4 Fourth Planned Mailing to ACS Households in 2020

This mailing is a postcard.

8.1.4.1 Address side of Postcard for Testing, Mailing 4:



8.1.4.2 Text side of Postcard for Testing, Mailing 4:

ACS-29(LX)(2020) (8-29-2018)



United States[®]
Census
Bureau

Washington, DC 20233-0001
Office of the Director

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau . . .

Within the last few weeks, the U.S. Census Bureau sent you several requests to complete the American Community Survey. **Now is the time to complete the survey if you have not already done so.** Please complete the questionnaire and return it now OR go to <https://respond.census.gov/acs> to respond online.

Your response to both this survey and the 2020 Census is required by U.S. law. If you do not respond to this survey, a Census Bureau interviewer may contact you to complete the survey. Local and national leaders use the information from this survey for planning schools, hospitals, roads, and other community needs.

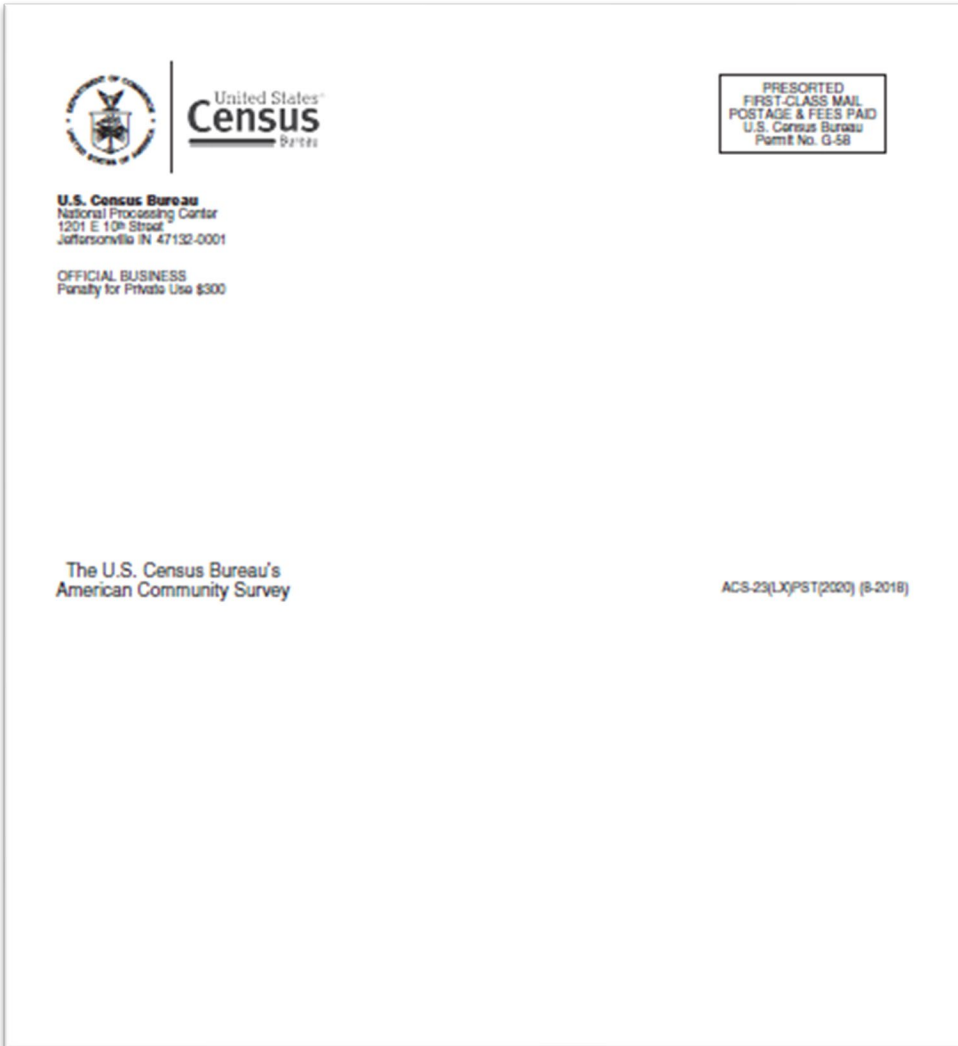
If you need help completing the American Community Survey or have questions, please call our toll-free number (1-800-354-7271).

Thank you.

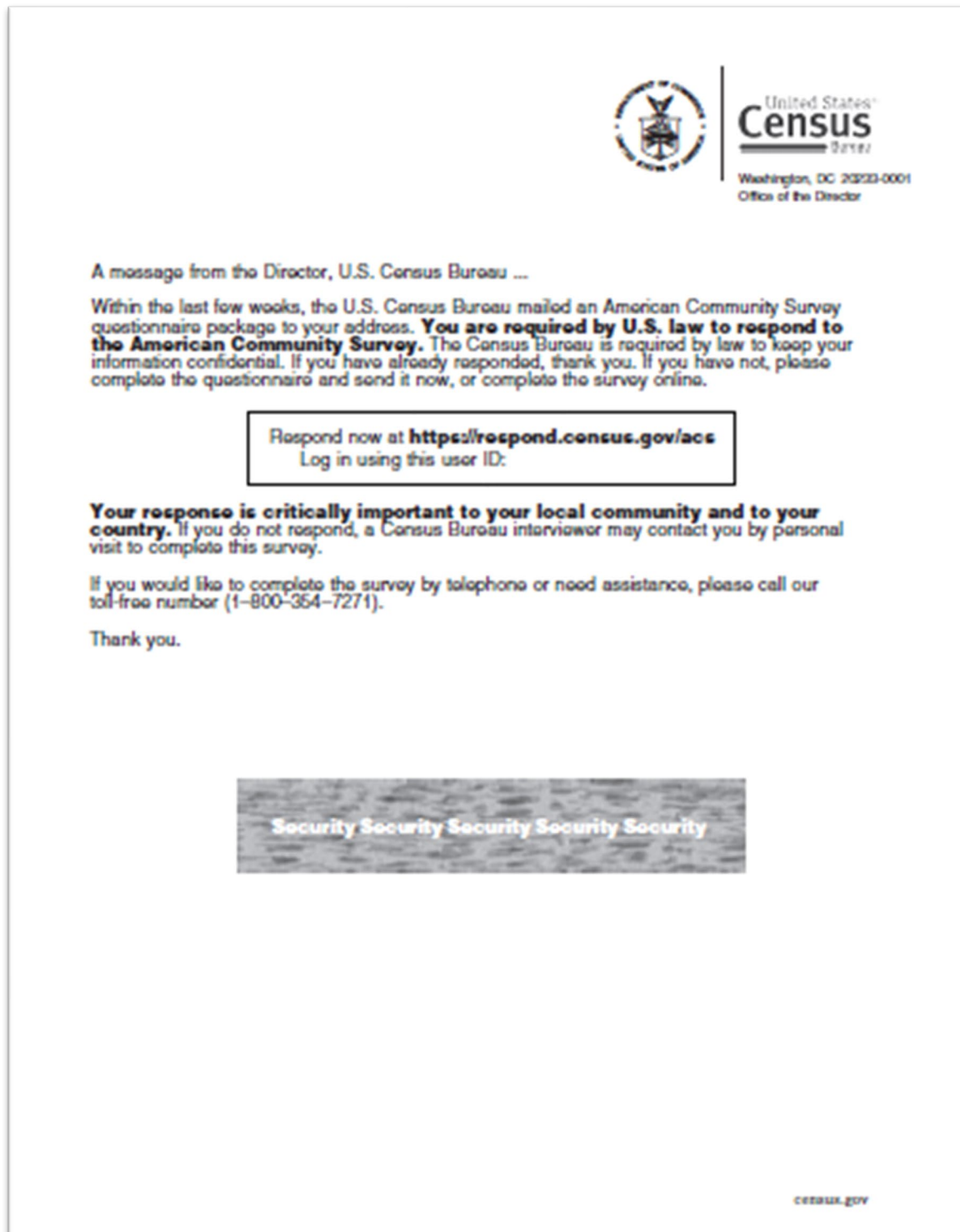
8.1.5 Fifth Planned Mailing to ACS Households in 2020

This mailing is a pressure seal mailer.

8.1.5.1 Outside of Pressure Seal Mailer for Testing, Mailing 5:



8.1.5.2 Inside of Pressure Seal Mailer for Testing, Mailing 5:



8.2 2020 ACS Field Flier for Cognitive Testing

The American Community Survey and the 2020 Census

I already answered the 2020 Census. Is this the same thing?

The American Community Survey is different from the 2020 Census.

How is the American Community Survey different from the 2020 Census?

The American Community Survey (ACS) shows how we live—our education, housing, jobs, and more. The ACS provides information about the social and economic needs of your community every year. For example, results may be used to decide where new schools, hospitals, and fire stations are needed.

The census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire U.S. population to Congress.

Do I have to answer both?

Yes, you are required by law to answer both the American Community Survey and the 2020 Census (Title 13, U.S. Code).

Your responses will help your community get its fair share of federal funding. The data help determine how more than \$675 billion is distributed to states and communities every year.

Can you use my 2020 Census answers for the American Community Survey?

No, your answers to the 2020 Census cannot be used for the American Community Survey (ACS). The American Community Survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, health insurance, and transportation.

Why was I chosen for the American Community Survey?

The U.S. Census Bureau chose this address, not you personally, as part of a randomly selected sample.

Thank you for your participation in both the ACS and the 2020 Census!



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Connect with us @uscensusbureau

The American Community Survey

Each year, a random sample of addresses completes the American Community Survey.

Respond online at
respond.census.gov/acs

or

Respond by mail
using the paper form

The American Community Survey asks questions about topics not on the 2020 Census, such as education, employment, health insurance, and transportation.



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Connect with us @uscensusbureau

8.3 Draft 2020 Census Mailing Materials

8.3.1 First Mailing to Households for the 2020 Census

This mail package contained the following items:

- Invitation Letter
- Language Assistance Sheet
- Package Envelope

8.3.1.1 Invitation Letter, front

Draft 11 (8-13-2018)

OMB No. xxxxx-xxxx: Approval Expires xx/xx/xxxx



United States
**Census
2020**

U.S. Census Bureau

Washington, DC 20233-0001

Office of the Director

March 12, 2020

A Message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Dear Resident:

This is your invitation to respond to the **2020 Census**. We need your help to count everyone in the United States by providing basic information about all adults, children, and babies living or staying at this address.

Results from the 2020 Census will be used to:

- Direct billions of dollars in federal funds to local communities for schools, roads, and other public services.
- Help your community prepare to meet transportation and emergency readiness needs.
- Determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and your political representation at all levels of government.

Respond by April 1st at:
XXXX.XXXX.gov

Your Census ID is:

The Census Bureau is using the internet to securely collect your information. Responding online helps us conserve natural resources, save taxpayer money, and process data more efficiently. If you are unable to complete your 2020 Census questionnaire online, we will send you a paper questionnaire in a few weeks for you to complete and mail back.

The census is so important that your response is required by law, and your answers are kept completely confidential. If you do not respond, we will need to send a Census Bureau interviewer to your home to collect your answers in person. If you need help completing your 2020 Census questionnaire, please call toll-free 1-844-330-2020.

Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

Enclosures

Mensaje importante: Para completar su cuestionario del Censo del 2020, visite **xxxx.xxxx.gov** o llame gratis al 1-844-468-2020.

census.gov

D-LF1 (8-2018)

Base prints black 100%

Overlay prints cyan #6 (10%)

8.3.1.2 Invitation Letter, back

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **XXXX-XXXX.gov**

What is the 2020 Census?

The goal of the census is to count every person living in the United States once, only once and in the right place. Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution mandates that this population and housing count occur every 10 years. Census data guide how more than \$675 billion in federal funding is distributed to states and communities each year.

Am I required to respond to the 2020 Census?

Yes, you are required by law to respond to the 2020 Census (Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141 and 193). We are conducting the 2020 Census under the authority of Title 13, U.S. Code, Sections 141, 193 and 221. This collection of information has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The eight-digit OMB approval number is XXXX-XXXX. If this number were not displayed, we could not conduct the census.

How long will my 2020 Census questionnaire take?

The Census Bureau estimates that completing the questionnaire will take 10 minutes on average.

Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this burden to: Paperwork Reduction Project XXXX-XXXX, U.S. Census Bureau, DCMD-2H174, 4600 Silver Hill Road, Washington, DC 20233. You may email comments to <2020.census.paperwork@census.gov>. Use "Paperwork Reduction Project XXXX-XXXX" as the subject.

How do I respond?

Go to XXXX.XXXX.gov to complete your 2020 Census questionnaire online. You will need the 12-digit Census ID found on the other side.

How will the Census Bureau use the information I provide?

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses to produce statistics.

Are my answers confidential and private?

Yes. The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information (Title 13, U.S. Code, Section 9). The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you or your household. Per the Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, your data are protected from cybersecurity risks through screening of the systems that transmit your data. All web data submissions are encrypted in order to protect your privacy.

Title 13 of the U.S. Code protects the confidentiality of all your information. Violating the confidentiality of a respondent is a federal crime with serious penalties, including a federal prison sentence of up to five years, a fine of up to \$250,000, or both. Only authorized individuals have access to the stored data, and the information you provide to the Census Bureau may only be used by a restricted number of authorized individuals who are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of your individual responses. Your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

For more information about how we protect your information, please visit our Web site at census.gov and click on "Data Protection and Privacy Policy" at the bottom of the home page. This page also includes information about the collection, storage, and use of these records. Click on "System of Records Notices (SORN)" and look for Privacy Act System of Records Notice COMMERCE/CENSUS-5, Decennial Census Program.

8.3.1.3 Language Assistance Sheet, front

OMB No. XXXX-XXXX Approval Expires x/xx/xxxx



United States
Census
2020

English
For help completing your 2020 Census questionnaire, call toll-free 1-844-330-2020.

Español (Spanish)
Si necesita ayuda para completar el cuestionario del Censo del 2020, llame gratis al 1-844-468-2020.

中文 (Chinese)
如果您填写2020年人口普查问卷时需要帮助，请拨打免费电话 1-844-391-2020 (普通话) 或 1-844-398-2020 (广东话)。

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)
Để được trợ giúp hoàn thành bản câu hỏi Thống Kê Dân Số 2020 của quý vị, hãy gọi số miễn phí 1-844-461-2020.

한국어 (Korean)
2020년 센서스 연구조사 설문지 작성에 도움이 필요하시면, 무료 번호 1-844-392-2020으로 전화해 주십시오.

Русский (Russian)
Для помощи в заполнении анкеты переписи населения 2020 года, позвоните по номеру 1-844-417-2020 (бесплатно).

العربية (Arabic)
للمساعدة في استكمال استبيان التعداد السكاني الخامس بك لسنة 2020، اتصل على الرقم المجاني: 1-844-416-2020.

Tagalog (Tagalog)
Para sa tulong sa pagkumpleto ng iyong palatanungan ng 2020 Senso, tumawag nang toll free sa 1-844-478-2020.

Polski (Polish)
Aby uzyskać pomoc w wypełnieniu kwestionariusza Spisu Ludności 2020, proszę zadzwonić pod bezpłatny numer 1-844-479-2020.

Français (French)
Pour obtenir une aide afin de remplir votre questionnaire du Recensement 2020, appelez gratuitement le 1-844-494-2020.


Kreyòl (Haitian Creole)
Pou jwenn ed pou ranpli kezyonè Resansman 2020 nou an, rele nimewo gratis nou an ki se 1-844-477-2020.

Português (Portuguese)
Para obter ajuda para responder ao questionário do Censo 2020, ligue gratuitamente para o telefone 1-844-474-2020.

日本語 (Japanese)
2020年国勢調査についてご不明な点があるときは、フリーダイヤル 1-844-460-2020 までお電話ください。

FORM D-UI (7-30-2018)

8.3.1.4 Language Assistance Sheet, back



United States

Census

2020

English
Go to XXXX.XXXX.gov and select "English," located in the upper-right corner of the window, to access your 2020 Census questionnaire in English.

Español (Spanish)
Vaya a XXXX.XXXX.gov y seleccione "Español", en la esquina superior derecha de la ventana, para acceder al cuestionario del Censo del 2020 en español.

中文 (Chinese)
請進入網站 XXXX.XXXX.gov，並選擇位於窗口右上角的「中文」，以連接到您的中文版 2020 年人口普查問卷。

Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese)
Hãy vào trang mạng XXXX.XXXX.gov và chọn "Tiếng Việt" ở góc trên bên phải của cửa sổ để truy cập bản câu hỏi Thống Kê Dân Số 2020 bằng Tiếng Việt.

한국어 (Korean)
2020년 센서스 연구조사 설문지를 한국어로 표시하면 인터넷 사이트 XXXX.XXXX.gov로 가서서 화면의 오른쪽 상단 코너에 있는 "한국어"를 선택해 주십시오.

Русский (Russian)
Чтобы получить доступ к анкете переписи населения 2020 года на русском языке, зайдите на веб-сайт XXXX.XXXX.gov и выберите «Русский» в правом верхнем углу окна.

العربية (Arabic)
تفضل بزيارة XXXX.XXXX.gov وحدد "العربية"، الموجودة في الزاوية اليمنى العلوية من الشاشة، للوصول إلى استبيان التعداد السكاني لسنة 2020 الخاص بك باللغة العربية.

Tagalog (Tagalog)
Pumunta sa XXXX.XXXX.gov at piliin ang "Tagalog," na nasa itaas na kanang sulok ng window, upang ma-access ang iyong palatanungan ng 2020 Senso sa Tagalog.

Polski (Polish)
Aby uzyskać dostęp do kwestionariusza Spisu Ludności 2020 w języku polskim, proszę przejść na stronę XXXX.XXXX.gov i wybrać "Polski" w górnym prawym rogu ekranu.

Français (French)
Rendez-vous sur XXXX.XXXX.gov et sélectionnez « Français », situé dans le coin supérieur droit de la fenêtre, pour accéder à votre questionnaire du Recensement 2020 en français.



Kreyòl (Haitian Creole)
Ale sou sitwèb XXXX.XXXX.gov epi chwazi "Kreyòl," sou kwen anwo nan bò dwat fenèt la, pou jwenn aksè nan kesyonè Resansman 2020 ou a an kreyòl ayisyen.

Português (Portuguese)
Visite XXXX.XXXX.gov e clique em "Português" no canto superior direito da janela para acessar o questionário do Censo 2020 em português.

日本語 (Japanese)
XXXX.XXXX.govにアクセスして、ウィンドウの右上角にある「日本語」を選択し、2020年国勢調査（日本語版）にアクセスしてください。

67

8.3.1.5 Outbound envelope, front

	<p>United States Census 2020</p>	<p>PRESORTED FIRST-CLASS MAIL POSTAGE & FEES PAID U.S. CENSUS BUREAU PERMIT NO. G-58</p>
<p>U.S. Census Bureau National Processing Center 1201 E 10th Street Jeffersonville IN 47132</p>		
<p>OFFICIAL BUSINESS Penalty for Private Use \$300</p>		
<p>YOUR RESPONSE IS REQUIRED BY LAW</p> <p>SU RESPUESTA ES REQUERIDA POR LEY</p>		

8.3.1.6 Outbound envelope, back



8.3.2 Second Mailing to Households for the 2020 Census

This mail package contained the following items:

- Reminder Letter
- Letter Envelope

8.3.2.1 Reminder Letter

Draft 6 (6-7-2018)

OMB No. xxx-xxxx: Approval Expires xx/xx/xxxx



United States
**Census
2020**

U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
Office of the Director

March 16, 2020

A Message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Dear Resident:

Recently, you should have received instructions for completing your **2020 Census** questionnaire online. Local communities depend on information from the Census Bureau to fund programs that promote the well-being of families and children as well as equal employment opportunities for you and your neighbors. If you have not already responded, please complete your short 10-minute 2020 Census questionnaire now.

Respond now at
XXXX.XXXX.gov

Your Census ID is:

If we do not receive your response online, we will mail a paper questionnaire to your address in a few weeks.

Your response is important to your local community and your country. By law, your response is required, and your answers are confidential. If you do not respond, we will need to send a Census Bureau interviewer to your home to collect your answers in person.

If you need help completing your 2020 Census questionnaire, please call toll-free 1-844-330-2020.

If you have already completed your 2020 Census questionnaire, we thank you.

Mensaje importante: Para completar su cuestionario del Censo del 2020, por favor visite **XXXX.XXXX.gov** o llame gratis al 1-844-468-2020.

census.gov

D-LF2 (6-2018)

Base prints black 100% Overlay prints cyan #6 (10%)

8.3.2.2 Letter envelope, front

 **United States Census 2020**
U.S. Census Bureau
National Processing Center
1201 E 10th Street
Jeffersonville IN 47132

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for Private Use \$300

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

**YOUR RESPONSE IS
REQUIRED BY LAW**
**SU RESPUESTA ES
REQUERIDA POR LEY**

PRESORTED
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
PERMIT NO. G-58

8.3.2.3 Letter envelope, back

Available online
Disponible en internet



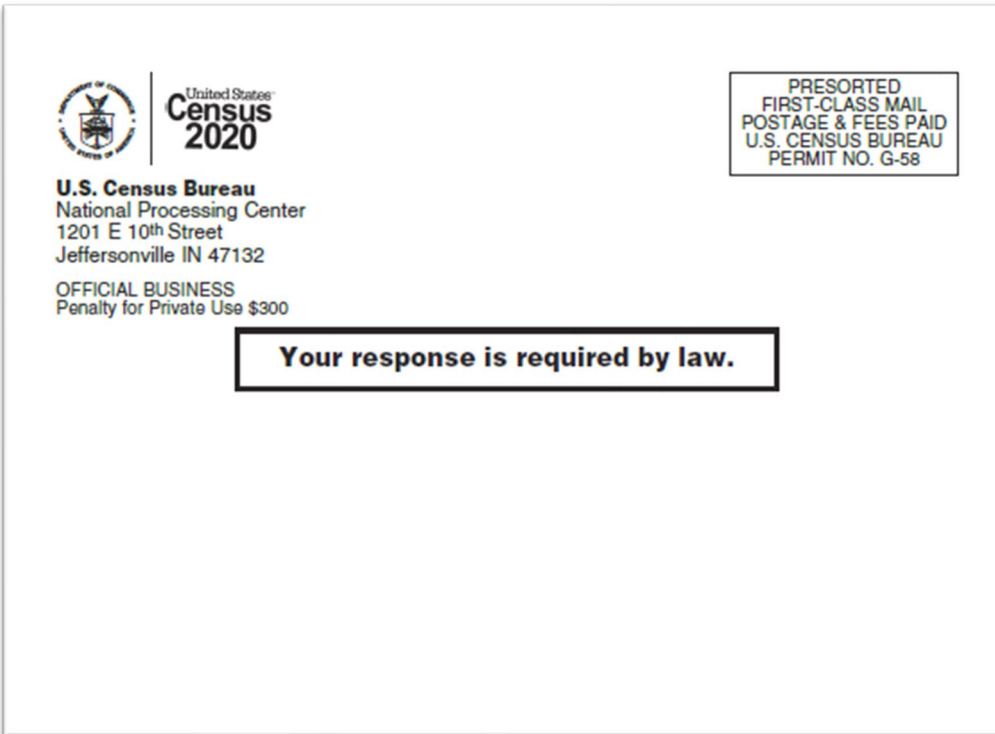
xxxx-xxxx.gov

LE02(E/S) (R-2019)

8.3.3 Third Mailing to Households for the 2020 Census

This mailing is a postcard.

8.3.3.1 Postcard, front



8.3.3.2 Postcard, back

March 26, 2020

A Message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Dear Resident:

Now is the time to respond.

The Census Bureau sent you several requests to complete your **2020 Census** questionnaire. If you have not already responded, it is important that you complete your 10-minute questionnaire now.

Respond now at **XXXX.XXXX.gov**

You are required by law to respond to the 2020 Census. Help us conserve natural resources, process data more efficiently, and save taxpayer money by responding online. Otherwise, a Census Bureau interviewer may visit you to complete your 2020 Census questionnaire.

The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information. The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your information in a way that could identify you or your household.

If you are unable to respond online, we will mail you a paper questionnaire next week. If you need help completing your 2020 Census questionnaire, please call toll-free 1-844-330-2020.

Mensaje importante: Para completar su cuestionario del Censo del 2020, por favor visite **XXXX.XXXX.gov** o llame gratis al 1-844-468-2020.

D-PF3 (6-2018)

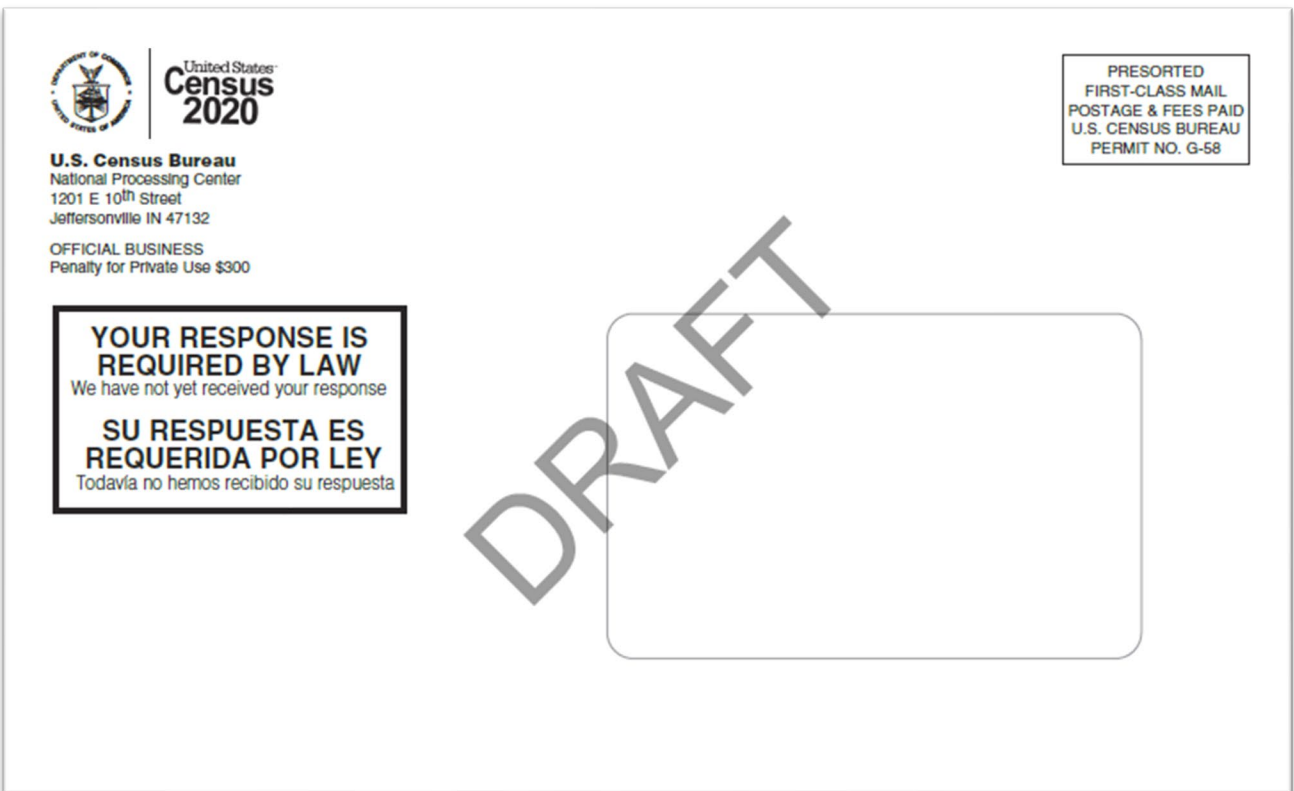
OMB No. xxxx-xxxx: Approval Expires xx/xx/xxxx

8.3.4 Fourth Mailing to Households for the 2020 Census

This mail package contained the following items:

- Package Envelope
- Reminder Letter
- Language Assistance Sheet (same as in Sections 8.3.1.3 and 8.3.1.4)
- Questionnaire (not shown)
- Return Envelope

8.3.4.1 Outbound package envelope, front



8.3.4.2 Outbound package envelope, back

Available online
Disponible en internet





xxxx-xxxx.gov

D-E04(E/S) (8-2018)

8.3.4.3 Reminder Letter

Draft 11 (8-13-2018)

OMB No. xxxxx-xxxx: Approval Expires xx/xx/xxxx



U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
Office of the Director

Important Note:
You are receiving this notice because we did not receive your response by March 27, 2020.

April 8, 2020

A Message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Dear Resident:

A few weeks ago, the Census Bureau sent instructions for completing your **2020 Census** questionnaire online. If you have already completed your 2020 Census questionnaire, you do not need to take any further action. If you have not already responded to this important 10-minute questionnaire, please do so now.

Complete your questionnaire using ONLY ONE of the following options:

- Respond online at **XXXX.XXXX.gov**
You will need to provide your 12-digit Census ID, which is printed just below the barcode on the front of the enclosed questionnaire.
- If you are unable to respond online, fill out and mail back the enclosed questionnaire in the postage-paid envelope provided.

Your response is important to your community.
You are required by law to respond to the 2020 Census. It is vital that you complete your 2020 Census questionnaire to help meet critical needs in your area – such as helping to put roads, parks, and hospitals where they are needed most.

If you do not respond promptly, we will need to send a Census Bureau interviewer to your home to collect your answers in person.

Your answers are completely confidential.
By law, the Census Bureau is required to protect your information.

If you need help completing your 2020 Census questionnaire, please call toll-free 1-844-330-2020.

Thank you for your prompt response.

Enclosures



Mensaje importante: Para completar su cuestionario del Censo del 2020, visite **xxxx.xxxx.gov** o llame gratis al 1-844-468-2020.

census.gov

D-L4 (8-2018)

Base prints black 100% overlay prints cyan #6 10%

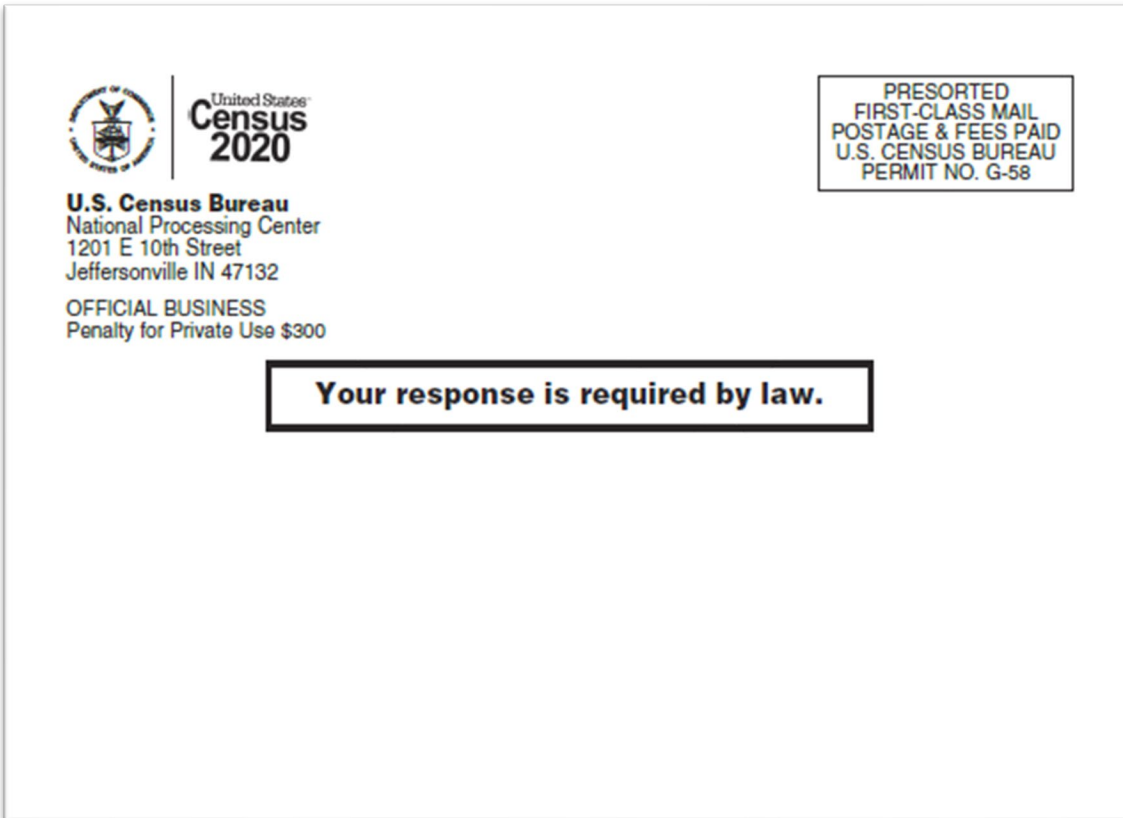
8.3.4.4 Return envelope

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER			<div>NO POSTAGE NECESSARY IF MAILED IN THE UNITED STATES</div> 
<div>OFFICIAL BUSINESS Penalty for Private Use \$300 6385-47(2014) (10-2013)</div>			
<div></div>			
<div>BUSINESS REPLY MAIL FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 16081 WASHINGTON DC</div>			
POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU			
DIRECTOR US CENSUS BUREAU PO BOX 5240 JEFFERSONVILLE IN 47199-5240			
			

8.3.5 Fifth Mailing to Households for the 2020 Census

This mailing is a postcard.

8.3.5.1 Postcard, front



8.3.5.2 Postcard, back

April 20, 2020

A Message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau

Dear Resident:

It is not too late to respond to the 2020 Census! Make sure you are counted!

Please respond now at **XXXX.XXXX.gov** or complete and return the paper questionnaire we sent you earlier. If you are unable to respond online or need assistance, please call toll-free 1-844-330-2020.

Mensaje importante: Para completar su cuestionario del Censo del 2020, por favor visite **XXXX.XXXX.gov** o llame gratis al 1-844-468-2020.

D-P5 (6-2018)

OMB No. xxxx-xxxx: Approval Expires xx/xx/xxxx

8.4 Cognitive Interview Protocol

Cognitive Testing of ACS 2020 Mail Materials

RESPONDENT ID #: _____ DATE: ____ / ____ / ____

INTERVIEWER'S NAME: _____

START TIME: ____: ____ AM / PM

Introduction

DO NOT MENTION ACS OR DECENNIAL UNTIL PROMPTED TO DO SO.

Hello, my name is _____, and I work for the Census Bureau. Thank you for agreeing to help us today. Let me start by telling you a little about what we will be doing today.

Every year, the Census Bureau conducts a number of surveys. Today we're going to look at some of the items that might be mailed to you in 2020. We are testing mail for 2020 now so that we have time to plan our mailings in advance. [If needed: Because these are example mailings, they may not look quite as nice as they would in 2020.] We will go through some different pieces of mail one by one. After you've finished with one piece of mail, I will hand you the next. I'll explain each one to you as we go along.

As I give you these mailings, I'm going to ask you to treat each one as you would if it came to your home. Please go through these as you would at home, as if I were not there, but say out loud what you are thinking as you look at the mailings.

I'm also going to ask you some questions about the mailings and about your reactions to them. There are no right or wrong answers. I really want to hear your opinions and reactions to these pieces of mail, so don't hesitate to speak up whenever something is unclear. Please feel free to be honest.

[IF OBSERVER PRESENT]: I want to let you know that this interview is being observed by other Census Bureau staff. They are observing the interview because they are also interested in how Census Bureau mailings work for people like you.

Do you have any questions about what we'll be doing?

Informed Consent

- [HAND RESPONDENT COPY OF THE CONSENT FORM.]

Before we start, I would like you to read over the document in front of you. This document explains a little bit about this interview and provides information about your rights as a respondent, such as that your participation is optional, all information you provide is confidential, and we won't use your name in any report. It also asks for your permission to have this session

audio (if applicable: and video) recorded so that I can concentrate on what you are saying rather than having to take extensive notes. Please ask me any questions you have about this document. Once you have finished reading the document, please sign and date it.

- [RESPONDENT READS FORM THEN SIGNS AND DATES FORM]

Thank you for signing the consent form. I will also sign this form to show that I agree to everything in the form.

- [INTERVIEWER SIGNS AND DATES FORM]
- [IF RESPONDENT PROVIDES CONSENT TO HAVE THE SESSION RECORDED]: I will now turn on the recorder.
- [TURN ON RECORDER]

Think-Aloud

While you are looking at the materials I give you, I'd like you to tell me what's going through your mind. This could include what information you're seeing in each material, questions that come to your mind, and reactions you're having. You do not have to read aloud if you would not do that at home.

No practice think aloud. Encourage respondents to think aloud as needed throughout interview, especially with first few mailing pieces:

- What are you looking at?
 - What are you thinking?
 - Remember to tell me what you are thinking about as you look at these mailings.
-

Set 1: Observation

Research Questions:

1. **Did respondents understand that the ACS was different from the decennial census?**
If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
2. **Did respondents understand that they were required to complete both the ACS and the census?**
If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
3. **Did respondents notice and understand the language on the flap of the 3rd mailing envelope?**
4. **Did the FAQs answer the questions that respondents had?**

Okay, let's get started.

- Make observation notes below (see questions in red text). Note any nonverbal reactions.
- If respondent indicates they would not look at a piece of mail/would let mail pile up, note that but then ask them to look at it anyway.
- Let the respondent spend no more than 3 minutes looking at each mailing.
- Take back each mailing after respondent is finished with it—do not let them compare the mailings to each other until specified.
- **Hand materials to respondents SIDEWAYS, so that it is neither face up or face down.**

Mailing 1, Decennial #1 – letter: In mid-March 2020, you would receive this piece of mail. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which way does R take materials out of the envelope?
☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down
2. What materials does R look at, and in what order? Mark “X” if respondent did not look at a material. Otherwise put a number to indicate the order.
☐ Envelope, front ☐ Envelope, back ☐ Letter, front ☐ Letter, back
☐ Language assistance sheet, front ☐ Language assistance sheet, back
3. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
4. Does R comment on response being required?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
5. Does R read letter front; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely
6. Does R read FAQs on back of letter; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Note any comments R had on the back of the letter:

Other notes:

Mailing 2, Decennial #2 – letter: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you would receive a few days later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which way does R take materials out of the envelope?
☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down
2. What materials does R look at, and in what order? Mark "X" if respondent did not look at a material. Otherwise put a number to indicate the order.
☐ Envelope, front ☐ Envelope, back ☐ Letter, front ☐ Letter, back (blank)
3. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
4. Does R comment on response being required?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
5. Does R read letter front; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Other notes:

Mailing 3, ACS #1 – letter: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you would receive about a week later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which way does R take materials out of the envelope?
☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down
2. What materials does R look at, and in what order? Mark "X" if respondent did not look at a material. Otherwise put a number to indicate the order.
☐ Envelope, front ☐ Envelope, back ☐ Letter, front ☐ Letter, back
☐ FAQ Brochure ☐ Instruction card, front ☐ Instruction card, back
☐ Language brochure
3. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
4. Does R comment on response being required?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
5. Does R read letter front; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely
6. Does R read FAQs on **back of letter**; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Note any comments R had on the back of the letter:

Note any comments R had on envelope flap:

Other notes:

Mailing 4, Decennial #3 – postcard: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you *might* receive a few days later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Does R look at both sides?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

3. Does R comment on response being required?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

4. Does R read content; if so, how closely?

☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Other notes:

Mailing 5, ACS #2 – first pressure seal: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you would receive a few days later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which way does R open pressure seal?

☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down

2. Does R look at both sides (address side and blank side)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

4. Does R comment on response being required?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

5. Does R read content inside pressure seal; if so, how closely?

☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Other notes:

Set 1: Neutral Probing

Thank you. Now I have a few questions I'd like to ask you about the mailings. You can look through the mailings again if you'd like, but you don't have to.

- Only ask probe if not mentioned during think aloud.
- If timing is a concern, spend less time on decennial materials than on ACS materials.
- Take back each mailing after respondent is finished with it—do not let them compare the mailings to each other until specified.
- **Hand materials to respondents SIDEWAYS, so that it is neither face up or face down.**

Mailing 1, Decennial #1 – letter:

This is the first mailing you received. [Give respondent mailing.]

1. *If needed:* When I first gave you this, what did you notice about it?
2. What do you think the main point of this mailing is?
3. What would you have done next after reading it? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)

Mailing 2, Decennial #2 – letter:

Thank you. [Take back previous mailing.] This is the second mailing you received. [Give respondent mailing.]

1. *If needed:* When I first gave you this, what did you notice about it?
2. What do you think the main point of this mailing is?
3. Did this seem the same as the first mailing, or did it seem different? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)
4. What would you have done next after reading it? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)

Mailing 3, ACS #1 – letter:

Thank you. [Take back previous mailing.] This is the third mailing you received. [Give respondent mailing.]

1. *If needed:* When I first gave you this, what did you notice about it?
2. What do you think the main point of this mailing is?
3. Did this seem the same as any of the previous mailings you saw, or did it seem different? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)
4. What would you have done next after reading it? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)

Mailing 4, Decennial #3 – postcard:

Thank you. [Take back previous mailing.] This is the fourth mailing you received. [Give respondent mailing.]

1. *If needed:* When I first gave you this, what did you notice about it?
2. What do you think the main point of this mailing is?
3. Did this seem the same as any of the previous mailings you saw, or did it seem different? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)
4. What would you have done next after reading it? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)

Mailing 5, ACS #2 – first pressure seal:

Thank you. [Take back previous mailing.] This is the fifth mailing you received. [Give respondent mailing.]

1. *If needed:* When I first gave you this, what did you notice about it?
2. What do you think the main point of this mailing is?
3. Did this seem the same as any of the previous mailings you saw, or did it seem different? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)
4. What would you have done next after reading it? (*If needed:* Tell me more about that.)

Set 2: Observation

Thank you. Now I'm going to ask you to switch gears a bit and go back to looking at some things you *might* receive in the mail if you had not responded to the earlier pieces of mail.

- Make observation notes below (see questions in red text). Note any nonverbal reactions.
- If respondent indicates they would not look at a piece of mail/would let mail pile up, note that but then ask them to look at it anyway.
- Let the respondent spend no more than 3 minutes looking at each mailing.
- Take back each mailing after respondent is finished with it—do not let them compare the mailings to each other until specified.
- **Hand materials to respondents SIDEWAYS, so that it is neither face up or face down.**

Mailing 6, Decennial #4 – questionnaire package: In mid-April, 2020, you *might* receive this piece of mail. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which way does R take materials out of the envelope?
☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down
2. What materials does R look at, and in what order? Mark “X” if respondent did not look at a material. Otherwise put a number to indicate the order.
☐ Envelope, front ☐ Envelope, back ☐ Letter, front ☐ Letter, back
☐ Questionnaire ☐ Return envelope, front ☐ Return envelope, back
☐ Language assistance sheet, front ☐ Language assistance sheet, back
3. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
4. Does R comment on response being required?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
5. Does R read letter front; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely
6. Does R read FAQs on back of letter; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Note any comments R had on the back of the letter:

Other notes:

Mailing 7, ACS #3 – questionnaire package: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you would receive a few days later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which way does R take materials out of the envelope?
☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down
2. What materials does R look at, and in what order? Mark "X" if respondent did not look at a material. Otherwise put a number to indicate the order.
☐ Envelope, front ☐ Envelope, back ☐ Letter, front ☐ Letter, back
☐ FAQ Brochure ☐ Instruction card, front ☐ Instruction card, back
☐ Questionnaire ☐ Return envelope, front ☐ Return envelope, back
3. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
4. Does R comment on response being required?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____
5. Does R read letter front; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely
6. Does R read FAQs on back of letter; if so, how closely?
☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Note any comments R had on the back of the letter:

Note any comments R had on envelope flap:

Other notes:

Mailing 8, ACS #4 – postcard: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you would receive a few days later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Does R look at both sides?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

3. Does R comment on response being required?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

4. Does R read content; if so, how closely?

☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Other notes:

Mailing 9, Decennial #5 – postcard: Thank you. [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you *might* receive a few days later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Does R look at both sides?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

3. Does R comment on response being required?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

4. Does R read content; if so, how closely?

☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Other notes:

Mailing 10, ACS #5 – second pressure seal: [Take previous mailing back.] Let's move onto the next piece of mail, which you *might* receive a couple weeks later. [Give respondent mailing.] Please treat it as you would if you were receiving this piece of mail at your home.

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

6. Which way does R open pressure seal?

☐ Address side up ☐ Address side down

7. Does R look at both sides (address side and blank side)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Does R comment on whether this is for decennial or ACS?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

9. Does R comment on response being required?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

10. Does R read content inside pressure seal; if so, how closely?

☐ Did not look ☐ Glanced ☐ Skimmed ☐ Read closely

Note any questions R asked/comments R made about this mailing:

Other notes:

Sets 1 and 2: Directed Probing

Research Questions:

1. **Did respondents understand that the ACS was different from the decennial census?**
If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
2. **Did respondents understand that they were required to complete both the ACS and the census?**
If so, which component(s) of the mail messaging succeeded in conveying that message?
3. **Did respondents notice and understand the language on the flap of the 3rd mailing envelope?**
Was one version of the flap wording more successful than the other in getting respondents to understand that the ACS is different from the census and that they are required to complete both?
4. **Did the FAQs answer the questions that respondents had?**
What questions did respondents have that weren't answered by the FAQs?

Thank you. Now I have a few more questions I'd like to ask you about the mailings. It's okay if you are unsure or do not know the answer. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Here are the mailings you saw today. You can look through the mailings again if you'd like, but you don't have to. [Place all mailings in front of respondent on table; reassemble in envelopes if necessary]

- Only ask probe if not mentioned during think aloud.
- Respondents can compare mailings if they want to but do not instruct them to do so.

Overall

1. *If needed:* Why would the Census Bureau be sending out these pieces of mail?
 - a. *If needed:* Were these mailings sent for the same survey, or for different surveys? Which one(s)?
 - b. *If respondent still does not seem to pick up on ACS/2020 distinction:* Did you notice that some of these pieces of mail were for the 2020 Census and some were for the American Community Survey? Go to #3.
2. *If respondent notices there are both ACS and 2020 mailings on their own:*
 - a. At what point did you realize some mail was for the American Community Survey and some was for the 2020 Census? Was there a specific mailing, or part of the mailings that made you realize this?
 - b. What difference, if any, did you notice between the mail for the 2020 Census and mail for the American Community Survey?
3. *If needed:* Is responding to the American Community Survey optional, or required?
 - a. *If respondent says it is required:* At what point did you realize responding was required?
4. *If needed:* Is responding to the 2020 Census optional or required?
 - a. *If respondent says it is required:* At what point did you realize responding was required?

Envelope

I'd like to go back to one of the envelopes you saw earlier. [Give mailing #7 envelope (ACS questionnaire package) to respondent with flap side up.]

1. *If needed:* Did you notice the wording on the flap of this envelope? [Point to language]
 - a. *If no:* Please take a moment to look it over. [Give respondent a moment to review.]
2. In your own words, what is this saying?

Now I'd like to show you another version of this envelope flap. Please take a moment to look it over. [Give to respondent; give respondent a moment to review.]

1. In your own words, what is this saying? [Point to language]
2. *If needed:* Which of these envelopes do you think better explains that the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey are different?
3. *If needed:* [If respondent thinks 2020 and/or ACS are optional: Responding to both the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey is required.] Which of these envelopes do you think better explains that responding to the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey is required?

FAQs

Let's go back to one of the letters you saw earlier. [Give mailing #3 letter (first ACS mailing) to respondent.]

1. *If needed:* Did you notice the back of this letter?
 - a. *If no:* Please take a moment to look it over. [Give respondent a moment to review.]
2. In your own words, what is this saying? [Gesture to back of letter]
3. Are there any questions that you think people might have that aren't answered here?

Now I'd like you to look back at another one of the letters. [Give mailing #7 letter (ACS questionnaire package) to respondent.]

1. *If needed:* Did you notice the back of this letter?
 - a. *If no:* Please take a moment to look it over. [Give respondent a moment to review.]
 2. Which version of the back of the letter do you think is clearer, if any? [Gesture to mailing #3 and mailing #7 back of letter]
-

Flier

Research Question: After seeing the field flier, did respondents understand that the ACS was different than the census?

We are almost done with the interview. I am going to give you one more thing to look at. If you had not responded to the mail we looked at in this interview, you might receive an in-person visit from a Census Bureau interviewer. The interviewer might show you this flier, or leave it at your door if you are not home. Please take a moment to look it over, and remember to tell me what you are thinking. [Give respondent a moment to review.]

- Make observation notes below. Note any nonverbal reactions.
- Let the respondent spend no more than 3 minutes looking at flyer.
- **Hand flier to respondents SIDEWAYS, so that it is neither face up or face down.**

OBSERVE (DO NOT READ TO RESPONDENT):

1. Which sides does R look at, and in what order? Mark “X” if respondent did not look at a side. Otherwise put a number to indicate the order.

___ FAQ side ___ ACS paper form/online form screenshot side

2. Does R notice that response is required?

___ Yes ___ No

If yes, where? (Can be more than one place): _____

3. Does R read content on FAQ side; if so, how closely?

___ Did not look ___ Glanced ___ Skimmed ___ Read closely

4. Does R read content on paper form/online form screenshot side; if so, how closely?

___ Did not look ___ Glanced ___ Skimmed ___ Read closely

Note any comments made or questions R asked about the flier:

Other notes:

Probe:

1. What did you think about this flier?
 - a. *If needed:* Was there anything you think people might find confusing?
2. Are there any questions you think people might have that are not answered by this flier?
 - a. *If needed:* Is there any other information that you think we should put on the flier?
3. What do you think about this line describing the census? [Point to “The census is conducted once every 10 years to provide an official count of the entire US population to Congress.”]
4. *If R only looks at one side:*

- a. Please take a moment to look at this side of the flier. [Give respondent a moment to review.]
- b. What did you think about this side of the flier?

Debriefing

Thank you. I have just a few more questions for you to wrap up.

1. Was there a specific piece of mail we looked at today that stood out to you for any reason?
 - a. *If needed:* Which piece? Why did that piece stand out to you?
2. If you had received this mail in 2020, do you think you would complete the 2020 Census, the American Community Survey, both, or neither?
 - a. *If needed:* Tell me more about that.
3. Is there anything we could change about the mailings that would make it clearer that some mail is for the 2020 Census, and some mail is for the American Community Survey?
4. Is there anything we could change about the mailings that would make it clearer that responding to both the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey is required?
5. Was there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to mention?

Great, thank you very much. Those are all of the questions that I had for you today. Thank you very much for your participation. [TURN OFF THE RECORDER.] Here is an envelope containing your \$40, and a voucher form that verifies I gave you the money. Please complete the information in the highlighted areas and sign and date. [HAND THE CASH INCENTIVE TO THE RESPONDENT AND COLLECT VOUCHER FORM.]